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CHAPTER 13
THE OLD GENERAL
MY LORD AND GENERAL MUJIN. PLEASE WAIT HERE
I WILL GO ON AHEAD FIRST
WHY?
THOSE PEOPLE ARE CONNECTED WITH THE LESSER KHAN
IT WOULD BE BETTER IF MY LORD WAS NEVER HERE....
IN CASE OF PROBLEMS THAT WOULD BE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION
.....

HOLD IT
NOW, FOLLOW ME!
YES!
DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE THEM
AND DON'T GET KILLED
HAH!
DO NOT WORRY
IF NEED ARISES FOR MY LORD TO COME DOWN I WILL SEND OUT A SIGNAL

THE HAN ARE SMART BUT THEY WILL NEVER BECOME STRONG
HUH?
THE WAY HE PUTS IT THE BEST WAY TO WEAKEN AN ENEMY IS FOR THEM TO FIGHT AMONGST EACH OTHER
FIGHTING AMONGST YOUR ALLIES
TO BE THINKING ABOUT HOW TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH A GOAL AT THAT AGE WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT DID HE GROW UP IN...

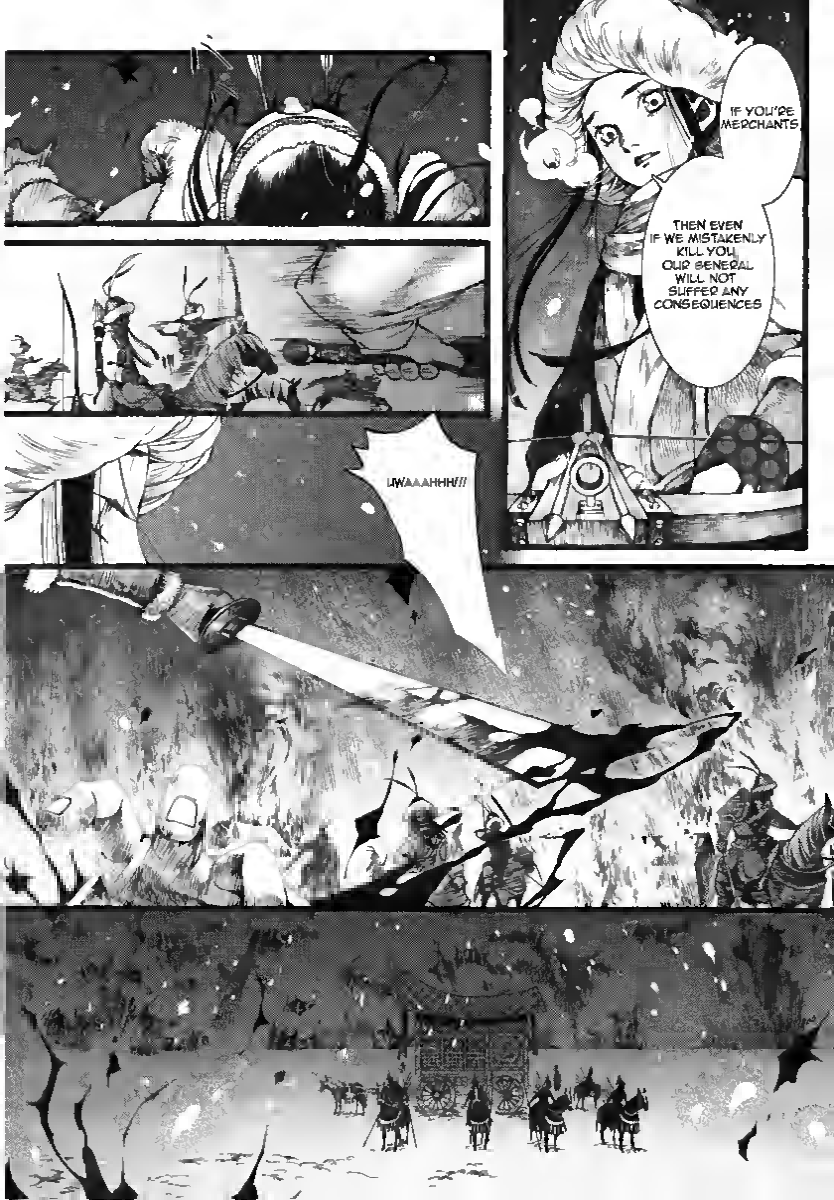
ARE WE REALLY ANY BETTER?
.....
THAT'S WHY IN ORDER TO PROTECT OUR SELVES WE HAVE CONSTANTLY SURVIVED THROUGH THE MOST TOUGHEST OF SITUATIONS
AND THE GREAT KHAN ACTS AS IF HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS
THE LESSER KHAN HAS BEEN TRYING TO KILL YOU FOR A WHILE NOW
I'M FINE WITH BEING THE SWORD OF THE GREAT KHAN FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE
NOTHING MORE NOTHING LESS
I OWE MY LIFE TO THE GREAT KHAN
I FORGOT TO ASK, BUT WHAT'S HIS NAME?
CHANGE
WELL, IF WE'RE SWORDS THEN I GUESS I'D PREFER WE BE USED AS ONE
.....

LI CHANG GE
DAMNIT, IT'S TOO COLD OUT HERE
JUST HOLD ON A WHILE LONGER, ONCE WE ENTER THE LESSER KHAN'S TERRITORY, WE CAN START A FIRE
WHO ARE THOSE HAN, ANYWAYS? THEY DON'T ASK FOR FOOD AT ALL
ALL WE NEED TO DO, IS TO HAVE THEM ARRIVE, ALIVE
WE SHOULDN'T QUESTION THE ORDERS OF THE LESSER KHAN
THOSE SOLDIERS CLAD IN BLACK ARE THEY REALLY HUMAN? THEY'RE SO SUSPICIOUS...
SHUSH DON'T TALK SO LOUD
IF THEY HEAR US IT'LL BE BAD
SOMEONE!!

WHO GOES THERE!?
WHO?
I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO ASK THAT QUESTION
STOP!
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!
YOU'RE A SUBORDINATE OF GENERAL SUN'S RIGHT? DO NOT WORRY
WE ARE YOUR ALLIES
WE JUST WANT TO PASS BY

ALLIES?
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE ALLIES OF THE TURKS TO BE ROAMING AROUND WITH PEOPLE FROM THE HAN?
WE ARE JUST MERCHANTS DOING BACK DOOR TRADES WITH THE HAN
THOSE HAN OVER THERE ARE OUR CUSTOMERS
I'M SURE THIS IS ENOUGH FOR YOUR TROUBLES
IT WAS OUR MISTAKE THAT WE DID NOT COME TO GENERAL SUN IN ORDER TO GET PERMISSION
COULD YOU POSSIBLY LOOK THE OTHER WAY JUST THIS ONCE?
!

IF I WERE YOU, I WOULDN'T MOVE
MR. NIAO KA
SO TELL ME
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
IF YOU KNOW WHO I AM, THEN YOU KNOW WHO IS BACKING ME
YOUR LORD CANNOT LAY A FINGER ON US, SO HURRY UP AND GO HOME
.....
KILL THEM
!


IF YOU'RE MERCHANTS,
THEN EVEN IF WE MISTAKENLY KILL YOU, OUR GENERAL WILL NOT SUFFER ANY CONSEQUENCES
UWAAAHHH!!!

.....
WAIT
IF THE LESSER KHAN HOLDS THESE HAN AS VALUABLE, THEN THEY ARE VALUABLE TO US AS WELL
WHAT ABOUT THOSE HAN
HOHO ....
YOU'VE GOT QUITE A SHARP WIT.....
WHO IS INSIDE THE CARRIAGE?

MY LORD WILL NOT MEET WITH A HAN OF UNKNOWN BACKGROUND AND IDENTITY!
THAT STYLE OF SPEAKING....
YOU'RE A HAN?
YOU GUYS, WAIT HERE
SO AND CALL YOUR LORD
IF YOU DO, I'LL GIVE YOU SOMETHING INTERESTING AS WELL
MASTER INSIDE THE CARRIAGE, CAN WE SPEAK FACE TO FACE?
IF POSSIBLE, I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS THIS INSIDE

LET HIM, AND ONLY HIM, PASS

EXCUSE ME
HURRY UP AND TALK

I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO TALK VERY LONG
.....
MY NAME IS LI CHANG GE

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, KING OF YAN, GENERAL LIYUN. THANK YOU FOR GRANTING ME AN AUDIENCE
PRINCESS YONGNING!!
COUGH
COUGH COUGH
GENERAL PLEASE DO NOT CALL ME PRINCESS
I AM NO LONGER A PRINCESS ANYMORE
GENERAL
I RECOGNIZED YOUR VOICE DO YOU NOT REMEMBER ME YONGNING, INT HE EASTERN PALACE?
YOU.. KNOW WHO I AM!?

I TOO AM NO LONGER LI OF THE KING OF YAN. I'M NOW USING MY OLD SURNAME OF LUO YUN NOW
HOHO.. VERY WELL, VERY WELL
GENERAL, WHY ARE YOU IN SUCH A PLACE...
WAS IT BECAUSE YOU WERE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH MY FATHER?
DID LI SHIMIN LOSE HIS MIND?
.....
I RAISED AN ARMY IN REBELLION AGAINST HIM
AND I LOST
YOUR FATHER AND I WERE OLD FRIENDS, I COULD NOT FORGIVE LI SHIMIN AND HIS ACTIONS
HUH!?

PLEASE, TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH
IN PLACE OF MY FATHER AND BROTHERS I THANK YOU GENERAL LIU
YOUR FATHER WAS THE OLDER BROTHER AND HAD A GOOD REPUTATION, AND HALF THE KINGDOM OF TANG EXISTS THANKS TO HIM
IF HE HAD LISTENED TO MY WARNINGS ABOUT HIS YONGER BROTHER... COUGH ..
THIS WOULD HAVE NEVER HAPPENED!
BEING INSIDE THE TURK'S TERRITORY, IS DANGEROUS
WE MUST THINK OF A WAY FOR YOU TO ESCAPE THIS PLACE!
THERE ARE NONE WHO CAN DEFEAT MY "18 HORSEMEN OF YANYLIN"
DANGEROUS? HAHAHAHA!
SO THOSE PEOPLE OUTSIDE ARE THE "18 HORSEMEN OF YANYLIN" THAT I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT
I SEE...
YES
HOWEVER...

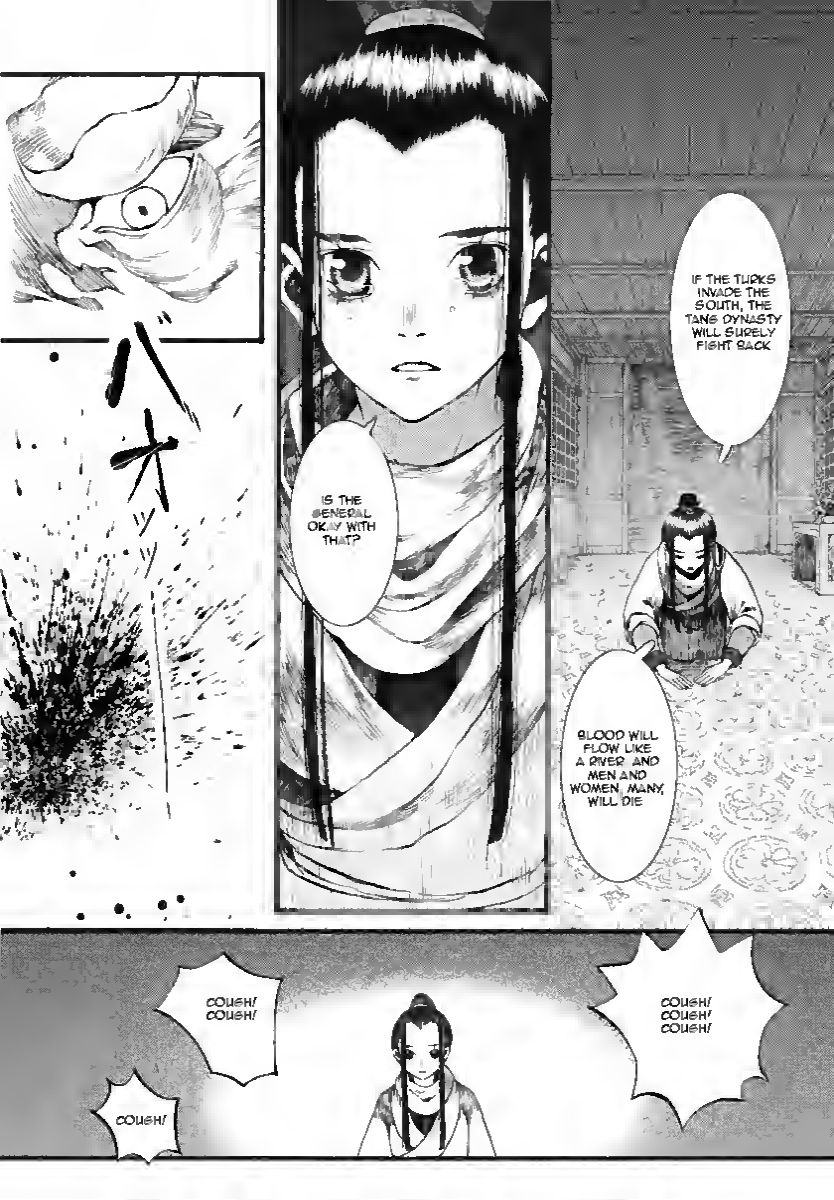
IF POSSIBLE COULD I HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT?
グゥ
EH?
AH, YES!
UNFORTUNATELY I ONLY HAVE ENOUGH FOR ONE PERSON
GENERAL, PLEASE EAT IT
TSCH!
EVEN IF WE DON'T EAT FOR 10 DAYS, WE'D STILL OWN THEIR ASSES
DAMN TURKS, THEY THINK THAT IF THEY STARVE US, WE WON'T BE OF ANY THREAT TO THEM
SO YOU WEREN'T
CAPTURED BY THE TURKS?
THAT'S RIGHT
I CAME HERE TO VISIT THE TURKS, MYSELF
HUH?

I WILL LEND MY TROOPS TO THE TURKS
AND RETURN TO CHANGAN TO KILL LI SHIMIN!
PLEASE, DON'T!!
GENERAL, PLEASE RETHINK YOUR ACTIONS!!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE WOES THAT YOUR FATHER SUFFERED!

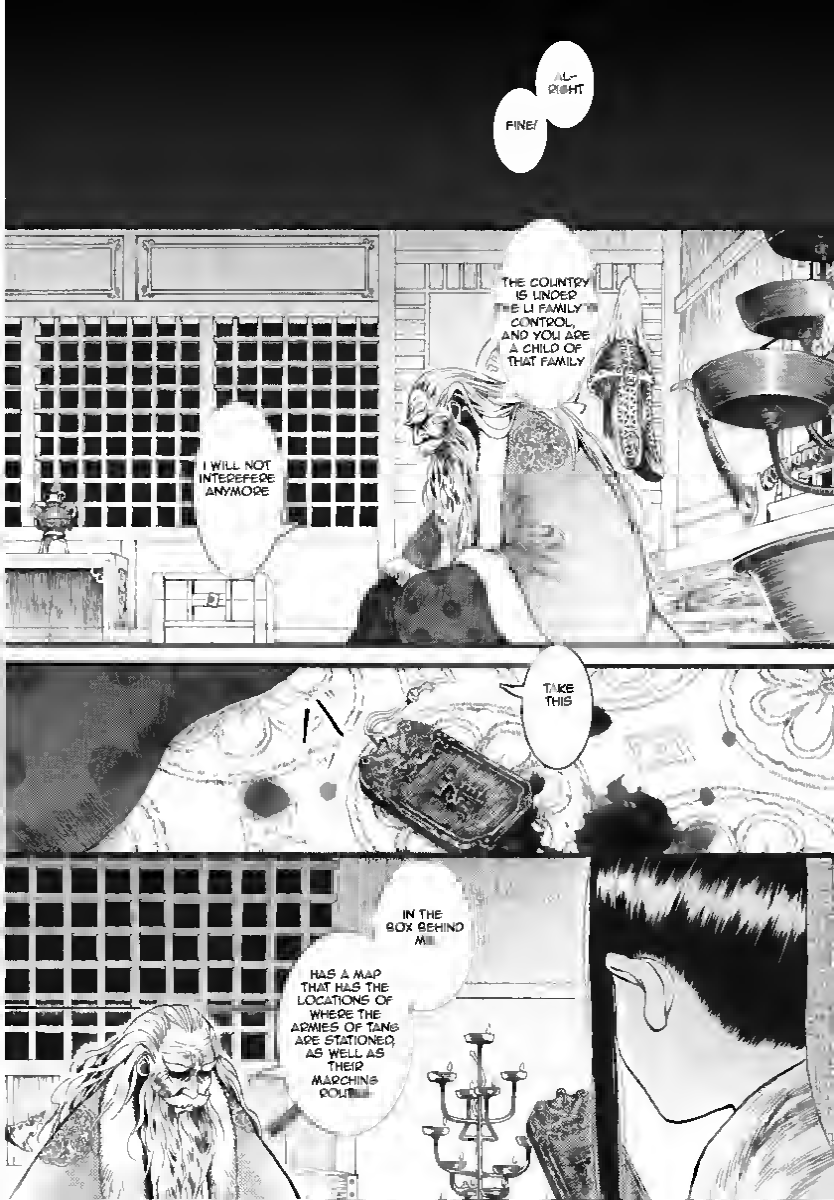
OH I SEE, YEAH YOU WERE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THAT UNCLE OF YOURS, WEREN'T YOU!
COUGH!
I SEE IT NOW ...COUGH! YOU DAMN UNGRATEFUL GIRL!
COUGH!
IT IS JUST AS YOU SAY
I HAVE NO ARGUMENTS TO MAKE AGAINST SUCH AN ACCUSATION
HOWEVER, IN MY HEART THE ONLY THING THAT EXISTS, IS MY REVENGE AGAINST LI SHIWIN, AND NOT THAT LOVING UNCLE
THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SINGLE DAY THAT HAS PASSED, THAT I DO NOT THINK ABOUT AVENGING THEM
HOWEVER IF YOU TAKE THE TURKS SOUTHWARD
COUGH
YOU WILL PLACE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IN JEOPARDY
SHUT UP!
WHE EZE
WHE-EZE
"THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND" IS USED MANY TIMES IN WAR
IF WE LOSE OUR CHANCE NOW, WE MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO DEFEAT HIM

GENERAL..
BE QUIET!!
DO YOU DARE TO LECTURE ME?
WHE-EZE
WHE-EZE
I WOULD NOT THINK OF SUCH A THING
YOU ARE A WAR HERO, I WOULD NEVER LECTURE YOU
HOWEVER YOU OF ALL PEOPLE KNOW THAT IT IS EASY TO LEND SOLDIERS, BUT HARD TO HAVE THEM RETURNED.
I WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH MILITARY AFFAIRS

...WHEN I HAD ESCAPED FROM CHANGAN
I HAD NOTHING TO LOSE AND THOUGHT THAT NOTHING COULD STOP ME
I HAVE A TON OF THINGS THAT I WISH TO PROTECT
HOWEVER, NOW I KNOW HOW WRONG I WAS...
GENERAL
ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE OKAY TO SULLLY THE NAME OF YOUR FAMILY JUST FOR THE SAKE OF OURS
THE ONLY THING THAT A WAR HERO NEEDS, IS TO WIN... HOWEVER...


IF THE TURKS INVADE THE SOUTH, THE TANG DYNASTY WILL SURELY FIGHT BACK
BLOOD WILL FLOW LIKE A RIVER AND MEN AND WOMEN, MANY, WILL DIE
IS THE GENERAL OKAY WITH THAT?
COUGH! COUGH!
COUGH!
COUGH! COUGH! COUGH!

WHE-EZE
YOU'RE GOING TO CRITICIZE ME!
WHE-EZE
WHE-EZE
...AS EXPECTED OF SOMEONE WHO WAS RAISED BY THOSE OLD GEEZERS
YOU MAKE ME SO ANGRY!
WHE-EZE
WHE-EZE
GENERAL, PLEASE HANG ON A BIT LONGER
ONCE WE RETURN TO THE CENTRAL PLAINS...
WHE-EZE
IT APPEARS
THAT I HAVE GOTTEN TOO OLD


ALL-RIGHT
FINE!
THE COUNTRY IS UNDER THE LI FAMILY'S CONTROL, AND YOU ARE A CHILD OF THAT FAMILY
I WILL NOT INTERFERE ANYMORE
TAKE THIS
IN THE BOX BEHIND ME
HAS A MAP THAT HAS THE LOCATIONS OF WHERE THE ARMIES OF TANG ARE STATIONED AS WELL AS THEIR MARCHING ROU

YOU ARE...
WRONG ABOUT ONE THING, THOUGH
GENE-RAL?
EVER SINCE I RAN AWAY FROM CHANGAN,
I WAS NO LONGER THE KING OF YAN
HOW-EVER
YOU ARE STILL THE PRINCESS OF THE TANG DYNASTY!

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CHAPTER 14
EMOTIONS THAT ARE PASSED ON

G...
GENERAL LUO YUN?

IMPOS-
SIBLE!

KILLING PEOPLE LIGHTING FIRES. HE'S CAUSING QUITE THE COMMOTION
SHALL WE GO DOWN AND TAKE A LOOK?
NO. WAIT FOR HIS SIGNAL
WE MADE A DECISION TO LEAVE IT UP TO HIM
THERE'S NO POINT FRETTING ABOUT IT NOW
NOW. I WONDER WHAT SORT OF EXCUSES HE WILL BRING TO US THIS TIME.

YOUR LORD WAS SO ANGRY AT ME THAT HE COUGHED UP BLOOD AND DIED
WHY ARE YOU BOWING DOWN TO ME?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN, THE MOST LOYAL SERVANTS EVER TO HAVE LIVED?
AREN'T YOU WAR HEROS, WHO FIGHT WHEREVER WHENEVER, WITH BRAVERY AND STRENGTH?
JUST NOW, THE MAN WHO KILLED YOUR LORD IS STANDING RIGHT INFRONT OF YOU
WHY AREN'T YOU STANDING UP TO KILL ME...
WHY DO YOU BOW YOUR HEADS TO ME?

THIS WAS AN ORDER FROM OUR GENERAL
THAT ANY WHO I S HANDED THE "SOLDIERS SEAL" WILL BE OUR NEW LORD
OUR ORDERS COME FROM THE HIGHEST OF PLACES
AND WE CARRY THEM OUT WITH FLOWING SWIFT-NESS

I UNDER-STAND
HERE ARE YOUR ORDERS...
LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE FINISHED
スッ

MY LORD
WHAT HAPPENED, HERE?
PLEASE REJOICE
THIS IS A VERY GREAT GIFT WE HAVE RECEIVED
THE SITUATION IS A BIT COMPLEX,
SO I SHALL EXPLAIN IN DETAIL, WHEN WE GET BACK

IF WE DO THESE 18 HORSEMEN, WILL SURELY BE GRATEFUL, AND RETURN THIS FAVOR IN KIND
WHO IS INSIDE THE CARRIAGE?
THE KING OF YAN, LUO YUN
THE BODY OF A GREAT GENERAL OF TANG, IS INSIDE THE CARRIAGE BEHIND ME
CAN I ASK THAT YOU GIVE HIM A FUNERAL?

SPEAK
LEAVE NO DETAIL OUT
WHAT IS THIS GREAT GIFT THAT YOU TOOK FROM THE LESSER KHAN?
IN ORDER TO GAIN THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN, AND HIS FORTUNE
AND THE LESSER KHAN IMMEDIATELY MADE CONTACT WITH HIM
SOMETHING I DID NOT EXPECT
THE KING OF YAN, LUO YUN REBELLED AGAINST TANG, AND LOST HIS FAMILY AND HIS LAND
HE USED A SCAPE GOAT, TO ESCAPE WITH INJURIES TO THE TURKS, WHILE BEING PROTECTED BY THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN
SO HE WAS
THINKING OF HOARDING IT ALL, IN SECRET, HUH
I DARE SAY, MY LORD WOULD ALSO THINK TO DO SOMETHING SIMILAR, IF GIVEN THE CHANCE?

THE LESSER KHAN HAS NO EVIDENCE AND CANNOT BRING FORTH THIS INFORMATION HIMSELF SO IF WE PLEAD IGNORANCE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DO NOTHING
IN ANY CASE, YOU'RE ALREADY ON BAD TERMS WITH HIM AND ALL THIS WAS DONE IN SECRET FROM THE BEGINNING
.....
EVEN IF YOU REPORT THIS TO THE GREAT KHAN
UNLESS YOU COMPLETELY DECIMATE THE LESSER KHAN,
YOU WILL BE PULLED INOT THE SUCCESSION SKIRMISHES OF THE KHANS
IT'S TIMES LIKE THESE,
THAT YOUR HEAD SEEMS TO BE SHARPER THAN USUAL
IF WE EXCHANGE THEM FOR FOOD AND HORSES WE'LL GET QUITE A BIT
IT'S QUITE A LOT
QUITE A FEW TREASURE BOXES TOO
I'VE FINISHED MY CALCULATIONS

YES, QUITE
THOSE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN THOUGH, ARE QUITE AMAZING
NONE OF THAT IS RELEVANT TO US
DON'T YOU AGREE, LITTLE STRATEGIST
HOWEVER, THEY STAND OUT TOO MUCH
THE LEGENDARY HORSEMEN WHO ARE ON PAR WITH 1000 SOLDIERS HAVE FALLEN INTO OUR HANDS
I AGREE WITH GENERAL MUJIN
IF THE GREAT KHAN LEARNS THAT WE HAVE THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN UNDER OUR THUMBS
OUR LUCK MIGHT TURN UPSIDE DOWN

ARE YOU TELLING ME TO SPIT OUT A CHUNK OF MEAT THAT I'VE ALREADY PUT IN MY MOUTH?
HEY
ALTHOUGH THEY MAY SEEM USELESS
IF WE GO NORTH, THEY WILL BECOME USEFUL AGAIN
AND NO MATTER HOW STRONG WE HOLD SOLDIERS THAT CANNOT BE USED BESIDE OUR OWN
NO MATTER HOW VALUABLE WE HOLD TREASURES THAT CANNOT BE TRADE
CREATE A TRADE ROUTE
THERE ARE STRONG SOLDIERS IN THE NORTH, BUT THEY ARE ALWAYS RUNNING LOW ON SUPPLIES
SO, MY LORD WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?
THE WESTERN PEOPLE, WANT THE WELL CRAFTED SUPPLIES FROM THE HAN, AND THE HAN WANT GOOD QUALITY HORSES FROM THE WEST

IF WE OPEN UP A TRADE ROUTE WE CAN EXCHANGE OUR TREASURE FOR FOOD AND LIVESTOCK, AND RECRUIT GOOD SOLDIERS TO UNITE THE SURROUNDING TRIBES INTO ONE
IF WE USE THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN TO GUARD THE TRADE CONVOYS, WE CAN ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AS WELL
SO THIS IS WHAT YOU CAME UP WITH HUH, LITTLE STRATEGIST
NOT BAD
I AM ONLY HERE TO SUGGEST. I LEAVE THE DECISIONS UP TO MY LORD TO MAKE
OKAY
I JUST HAVE ONE QUESTION
ARE THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN, TRULY LOYAL TO US

WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU SEND ME A MESSAGE, STATING THAT YOU WERE OKAY!?
IT'S ALMOST SUNRISE!
I SUNDLED UP NICE AND TIGHT THIS TIME
DON'T WORRY
I'M NOT YOUR MOTHER!
MMM
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SIT OUTSIDE, WITH ME?

LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BE SUNNY TODAY
WHEN DO YOU PLAN ON SLEEPING?
WHAT IS THIS?
A MEMENTO FROM MY MOTHER
WHEN I WAS IN LISLE QUITE A FEW WOMEN WERE WEARING THESE
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN JEWELRY LIKE THIS?

YOUR MOTHER WAS PROBABLY FROM A HIGH RANKING FAMILY
I'M NOT DOUBTING YOU OR ANYTHING, BUT
MIMI
TELL ME ABOUT YOUR HOME LAND
THE QUALITY OF THIS IS QUITE GOOD
MY HOMELAND IS AT THE BASE OF A HIGH MOUNTAIN AND THE WEATHER IS STABLE WITH PLENTY OF WATER AND GRASS
MY FATHER WAS THE TRIBAL LEADER AND THERE WERE ABOUT 100 PEOPLE IN OUR TRIBE
WE DIDN'T LIVE IN LUXURY BUT EVERY DAY WAS DECENT AND WE HAD NO PROBLEM SURVIVING

IF THE KONA TRIBE HADN'T INVADED US...?
WE WOULD'VE MADE MORE AND MORE CHILDREN AND LIVESTOCK...
BUT MY TRIBE LOST...
THE MEN WERE ALL KILLED AND THE WOMEN AND LIVESTOCK WERE DIVIDED UP
THE KONA TRIBE STARTED LIVING ON OUR LAND
BUT AFTER THAT
THE TURKS CAME IN AND UNDER THE GUISE OF "INTERVENTION" THEY SLAUGHTERED ALL THE KONA
THE TURKS DRESSED ME UP IN NICE CLOTHES AND SENT ME HERE
IF YOU WERE TO EXACT REVENGE ON SOME-ONE...
WHO WOULD I EXACT REVENGE UPON?
THIS IS LIKE THE LAW OF THE LAND

IF MY TRIBE HAD BEEN SUFFICIENTLY STRONG, WE WOULD'VE BEEN DOING THE SAME THING
WHAT IS THE FATE OF A WOLF WITH NO FANGS?
STARVATION OR BEING EATEN
YOU.
WANT TO GO BACK TO THE CENTRAL PLAINS, DON'T YOU?
IF THAT DAY COMES,
WILL YOU COME WITH ME?

BUT I WILL DEFINATELY HELP YOU ESCAPE HERE
WE WILL DEFINATELY SURVIVE THIS TOGETHER
MY HOME IS HERE IN THE GRASS-LANDS
NOPE

THE GREAT KHAN HAS ACCEPTED YOUR MOVING TO THE NORTHERN PLAINS
THE GREAT KHAN WAS TRULY DELIGHTED
AND STATED THAT IF ALL THE KHANS WERE LIKE GENERAL SUN THE TURKS WOULD BE AT PEACE
HE HAS BROUGHT A THOUSAND COWS AND SHEEP
AND A HUNDRED HORSES
AND 2 CARRIAGES WORTH OF WOOL AND CLOTH,
AND 10 CARRIAGES OF FOOD ALL TO GENERAL SUN
HE DIDN'T SEND ANY WOMEN, THIS TIME AROUND?

NO
DO YOU REQUIRE SOME ..
UH...
TELL THE GREAT KHAN THANK YOU
WE WILL LEAVE FOR THE NORTH, NEXT MONTH
THE GENERAL'S GRAVE HAS BEEN COMPLETED
MY LORD ARE THERE ANY OTHER ORDERS YOU'D WISH TO GIVE?
REMEMBER THIS PLACE
ONE DAY WE WILL MOVE HIS BONES BACK TO THE CENTRAL PLAINS
WE'RE HEADING OUT TO THE NORTH, IMMEDIATELY

YOU GUYS DRESS UP LIKE THE TURKS AND PROTECT THE CARAVANS ON THE TRADE ROUTES
DO NOT LET YOUR GUARD DOWN
MY LIFE IS RIDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THIS MISSION
AND DISGUISE YOURSELVES AS MERCHANTS AND GO TO SHUO PROVINCE AND FIND AN OLD MAN NAMED QIN GU
TAKE THIS TIGER SEAL AS WELL
AS LONG AS YOU TAKE THIS WITH YOU, SHUO PROVINCE SHOULD OPEN IT'S DOORS TO YOU
AND THEN LISTEN AND FOLLOW THE ORDERS OF QIN GU

TWO MONTHS AGO
SHUO PROVINCE RETURNED UNDER THE RULE OF THE TANG DYNASTY...
.....
IT MATTERS NOT
THOSE THAT KNOW OF THIS TIGER SEAL...
WILL NOT BEND TO THE TANG. NO MATTER HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED
THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM THE "KIRIN SEAL" OF THE SUI DYNASTY,
OR THE "FISH SEAL" OF THE TANG DYNASTY TODAY
THIS "TIGER SEAL" IS THAT OF POWER AND RESPECT FROM ANCIENT TIMES

MUCH LIKE YOUR PAST LORD
NOT OF YAN OF THE KING OF YAN
NOR LI FROM THE TANG DYNASTY
LIU YUN, WAS JUST HIMSELF NOTHING MORE NOTHING LESS
PEOPLE LIKE THAT
CARE ABOUT THE COUNTRY NOT THE DYNASTY

AIZEN HERE.

THAT TAKES CARE OF... 1/3 OF VOLUME 3.... I'LL PROBABLY HAVE 2-3 MORE CHAPTERS DONE BY TOMORROW, IF NOT THE DAY AFTER...

AGAIN, SORRY FOR THE HIATUS

SO MUCH TO DO, NOT ENOUGH TIME TO DO IT IN

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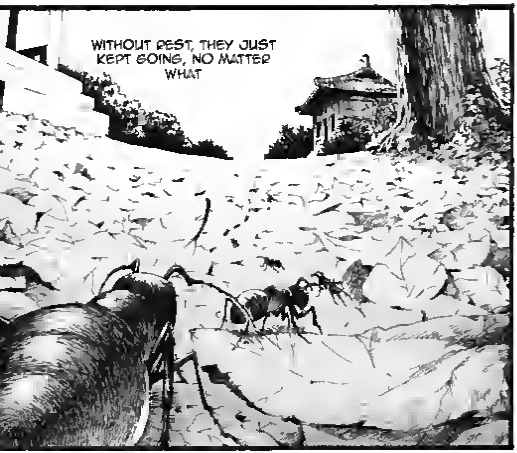
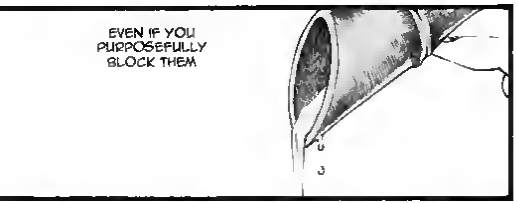
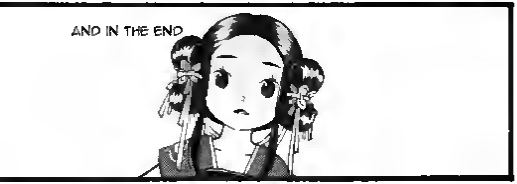
CHAPTER 15

VARIOUS UNCERTAINTIES


WITHOUT REST, THEY JUST KEPT GOING, NO MATTER WHAT


EVEN IF YOU PURPOSEFULLY BLOCK THEM

THEY DO NOT FAULTER


AND IN THE END

WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I SAW A LINE OF ANTS GO BACK TO THEIR NEST

THEY RETURN
GET THEM OUT NOW!
OH NO, ANTS!?
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE WE ARRIVED IN THE NORTH

.....
YOU'RE IN THE WAY OF MY CLEANING!
GET OUT NOW!
IT WON'T TAKE MORE THAN TWO MONTHS, FOR THIS LARGE TRIBE THAT IS BIG ENOUGH TO COVER AN ENTIRE CITY TO SETTLE DOWN
MILITARY ADVISOR LI
THESE CLOTHES ARE GIFTS FROM GENERAL SUN
ORDER WAS EASILY ESTABLISHED, AND THERE WERE NO OMISSIONS

PLEASE HAND THEM TO MIMI, INSIDE
THESE ARE GOOD QUALITY FUR, THEY WILL BE USEFUL IN CREATING TENTS THAT ARE STRONG AGAINST THE COLD
THIS KIND OF STRENGTH IS EXACTLY HOW THE TURKS WERE ABLE TO KEEP THE HAN ON THE DEFENSIVE FOR SUCH A LONG TIME
THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFEAT IN ONE BLOW
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
MY STRATEGIST
ARE YOU WONDERING HOW WE CAN MAKE A PROFIT, OUT HERE?

BETWEEN MY INTERNAL DUTIES, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, I HAVE LOTS TO DO
I WANT YOU TO HELP ME WITH MY WORK
SIR MUJIN
DO YOU NEED ME FOR SOMETHING?
WELL MASTER SUN HAS ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED YOU
I'D PREFER IF YOU DIDN'T THINK OF YOURSELF AS AN OUTSIDE IN HERE ANYMORE
IS IT REALLY OKAY TO LET SUCH AN IMPORTANT TASK FALL TO ME?
HE TOOK ALONG SOME OF HIS SUBORDINATES TO HERD SOME SHEEP
WHAT ABOUT OUR LORD?
THESE THINGS ARE WHAT MEN MUST DO, REGARDLESS OF RANK
OF COURSE HE DOES, EVERYONE WHO IS OLD ENOUGH DOES
OUR LORD DOES THINGS LIKE THAT? ISN'T THAT BENEATH HIM?
SIR MUJIN

DO YOU STILL NOT TRUST ME?
GENERAL SUN,
WILL REPLY WITH A FIST, IF HE IS OPPOSED AND WILL REWARD LOYALTY TEN FOLD
IF HE ACCEPTS YOU AS HIS ALLY,
HE WILL NEVER BETRAY YOU
HOW-EVER
I AM THE GENERAL'S SUBORDINATE

HOW CAN I TRUST A MAN WHO DOESN'T LOOK SAD WHEN HE IS BEING DOUBTED, NOR SHOWS ANY SIGNS OF HAPINESS WHEN BEING TOLD HE IS TRUSTED?

REPORT!
I HAVE SOMETHING URGENT I MUST REPORT TO THE LESSER KHAN!
LESSER KAHN OF THE TURKS
ASHINA SHE EO
RIGHT

WHAT HAPP-ENED?
SUN WENT TO THE NORTH
NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS
I CAN REST EASY

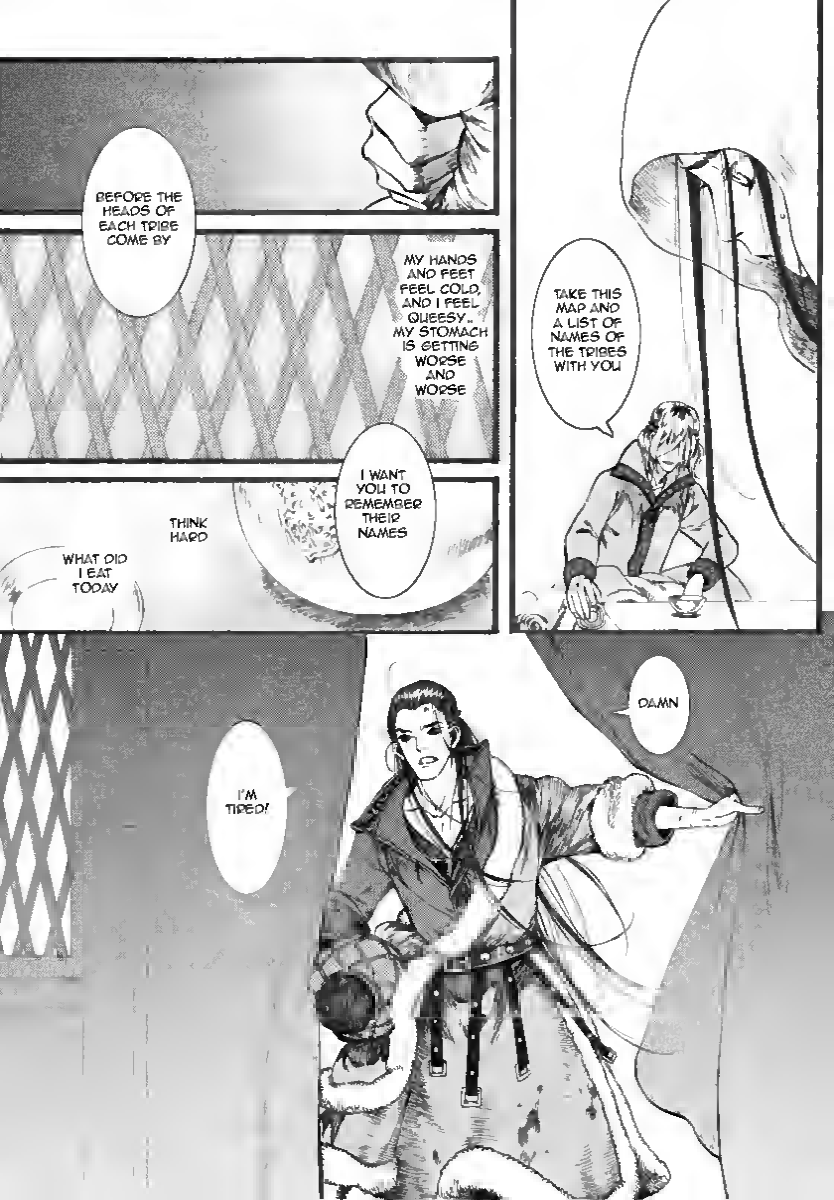
IF HIS FALLING BACK WAS A MOVE THAT HE DID JUST SO HE CAN ADVANCE AGAIN
IT WOULD BE SPE IT IF THAT WERE TRUE, BUT...
YOU ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO READ WHAT YOUR ENEMY IS THINKING
THAT'S WHY I AM AFRAID
LUO JIN SE
DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK THAT HE IS THAT SMART?
IS THAT REALLY NECES-SARY ?
AND ALSO DETERMINE IF LUO YUN HAS FALLEN INTO HIS
STRENG-THEN YOUR SURVEIL-LANCE ON HIM

SHE ER!
THAT GUY IS JUST ONE OF MANY DOGS THAT THE ASHINA CLAN HAS UNDER IT'S CONTROL
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, DION'T IP IF HE ISN'T AN ENEMY, THEN THAT'S FINE
BUT IF HE IS THEN WE MUST ELIMINATE HIM
IF YOU WISH TO BE THE NEW KING OF THE WOLVES
YOU MUST REMOVE THE FANGS OF THE OLD KING, FIRST
THE LESSER KHAN IS THE SON OF PRINCESS XINYI OF THE SUI DYNASTY?

HOWEVER WAI LUO KHAN DIED WHEN THE LESSER KHAN WAS LITTLE, AND NOW IT'S GONE FROM THE SUI DYNASTY TO THE TANG DYNASTY...
HIS MOTHER, PRINCESS XINYI WAS SENT FROM SUI FOR A PEACE TREATY
AND HIS FATHER IS THE LAST GREAT KHAN WAI LUO KHAN
THAT'S RIGHT
IN THE END, THE RANK OF GREAT KHAN WENT TO HIS UNCLE, AND NOT TO HIM
THAT'S WHY...
WHO WOULDN'T BE
SO
THE LESSER KAHN IS UNHAPPY WITH THAT, RIGHT?

SOMETHING'S WRONG...
EVEN IF WE MOVE HERE TO THE NORTH, HE WILL STILL SEE US AS A THREAT
SUN, WHO IS ADOPTED BY THE CURRENT GREAT KHAN, ISN'T ON THE FRIENDLIEST OF TERMS WITH HIM
THE NORTH WAS FORMERLY THE LESSER KHAN'S TERRITORY
SO THERE ARE QUITE A FEW PEOPLE WHO FEEL OBLIGATED TO THE LESSER KHAN HERE
MY STOMACH FEELS HEAVY, AND IT HURTS A BIT...
COULD IT BE...
NO
IMPOSSIBLE
IT WILL TAKE SOME EFFORT TO GRASP THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND

HEY ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
WHY ARE YOU SHIVERING?
THERE SHOULD BE NO REASON FOR HIM TO SLIP ME SOME POISON
IT'S A BIT COLD IN HERE
メラ
メラ
YOU'RE QUITE FRAIL, MR STRATEGIST
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SURVIVE OUT HERE IN THE NORTH LIKE THAT
I'M FINE, SIR MUJIN. PLEASE CONTINUE


TAKE THIS MAP AND A LIST OF NAMES OF THE TRIBES WITH YOU
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THEIR NAMES
BEFORE THE HEADS OF EACH TRIBE COME BY
MY HANDS AND FEET FEEL COLD, AND I FEEL QUEESY.. MY STOMACH IS GETTING WORSE AND WORSE
THINK HARD
WHAT DID I EAT TODAY
DAMN
I'M TIRED!

IS THAT WINE FROM THE KEI TRIBE?
OH
HOW WAS THE SHEEP HERDING? WILL YOU FINISH BY TOM-ORROW?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE HAD SOME
HEHE
NO...
I'VE HAD ENOUGH FOR TODAY
I THINK I'LL MAKE SOME SORT OF EXCUSE UP AND GO HOME

THE SUN'S STILL UP SO MAYBE I WILL WASH SOME CLOTHES
SIGH
ALL CLEAN
UGH YOU'VE LEFT YOUR CLOTHES OUT ALL OVER THE PLACE
HUH?
THIS IS BAD

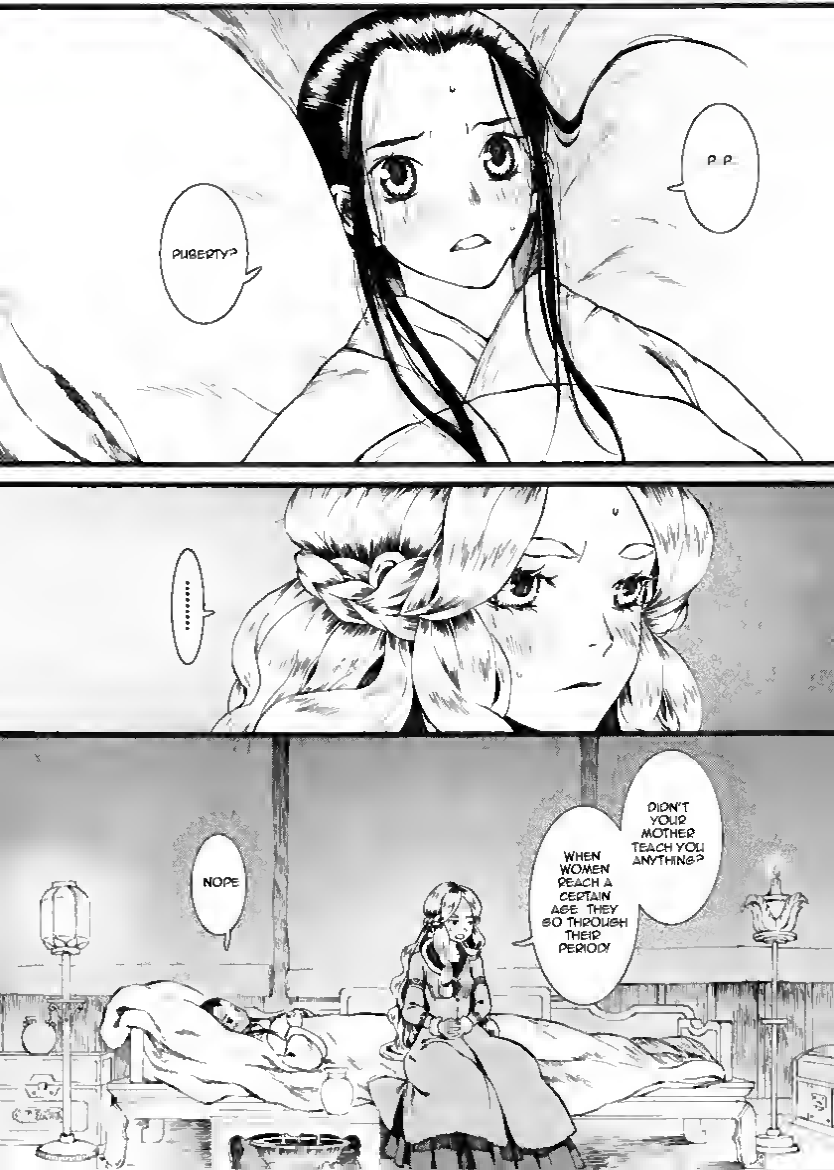
ISN'T IT A BIT TOO WARM IN HERE?
MUJIN
THAT'S NOT MY FAULT
HEY LET'S DRINK
YOU'RE REALLY LIKE A SIS, YOU KNOW THAT
.....

I AM GRATEFUL THAT MY LORD WISHES TO SHARE HIS DRINK WITH ME... BUT,
I AM CURRENTLY NOT FEELING TOO WELL
MAY I ASK FOR A RAIN CHECK?
NO
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE A WEAK ASS WOMAN OR SOMETHING
SO HURRY UP AND TAKE A DRINK!

ガシャン
HEY
ARE YOU...
DON'T TOUCH HIM!!

HE'S NOT FEELING TOO WELL
I'LL TAKE HIM BACK TO HIS TENT
COME ON JUST HOLD ON A BIT LONGER
PANT
PANT
.....
THE HELL IS WRONG WITH HIM?

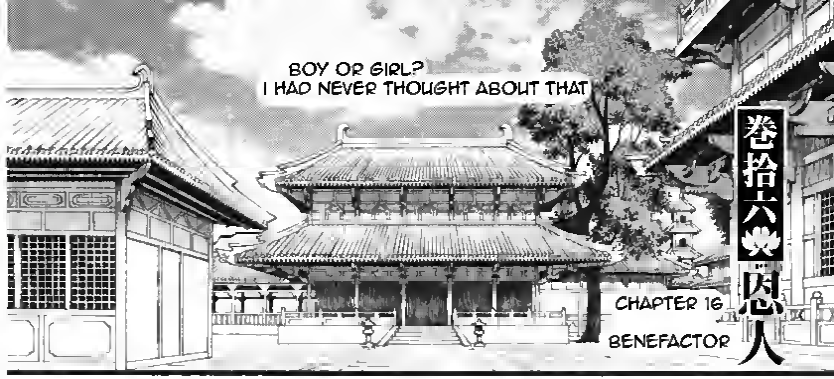
HMPH
LOOKS LIKE WE SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT HOW MUCH USE WE'LL GET OUT OF HIM
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE EATS IT'LL ALL GO TO HIS HEAD
LOOKS LIKE HE NEEDS TO EAT MORE MEAT
MAYBE THAT'LL MAKE HIM HEALTHY
THEN WHAT CAN WE
.....
グツグト


P.P.
PUBERTY?
.....
NOPE
WHEN WOMEN REACH A CERTAIN AGE THEY GO THROUGH THEIR PERIOD
DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER TEACH YOU ANYTHING?

BUT
I HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT THAT IS
SO THEN
FROM NOW ON,
YOUR VOICE WILL GET HIGHER, YOU'LL GET SKINNIER
YOUR BREASTS AND ASS WILL GET LARGER AND ROUNDER
EVERY MONTH FOR A COUPLE DAYS, YOUR BODY WILL FEEL HEAVY AND YOUR STOMACH WILL HURT
ALL IN ORDER TO PREPARE YOU FOR CHILD BIRTH
.....
I NEED TO BE CAREFUL
BUT WHY WERE YOU SO ANGRY?

I THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE SIMPLY DRESSING UP LIKE A MAN, BUT...
.....
I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD
YOU HAVE NO SENSE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN
IN THIS WORLD, MEN FIGHT FOR THEIR LAND AND THEIR WOMEN
WOMEN GO OUT AND FIND STRONG MEN, HAVE THEIR CHILD, AND TAKE CARE OF THE OLD PEOPLE AND THE CHILDREN
YET YOU ARE FIGHTING AS IF YOU WERE A MAN

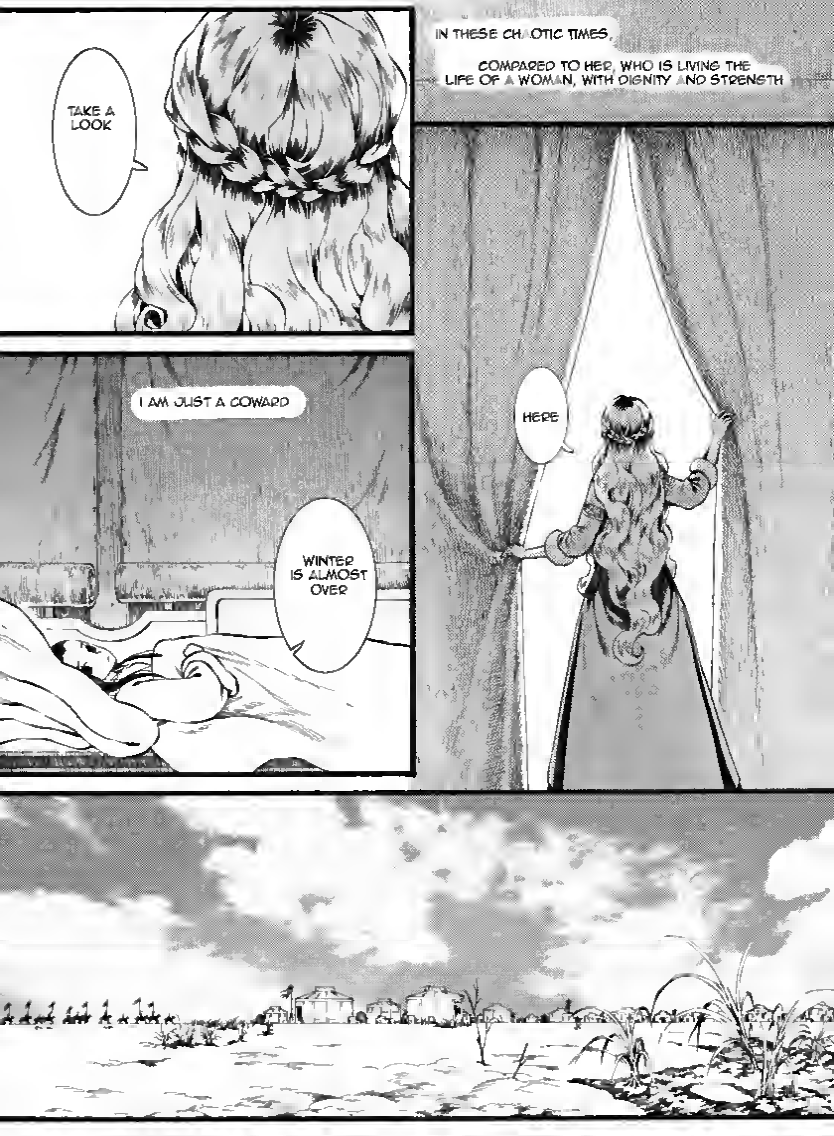
BUT THAT BODY OF YOURS IS FEMALE
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I HAVEN'T
GIVEN IT ANY THOUGHT YET


BOY OR GIRL?
I HAD NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT THAT
卷拾六 恩人
CHAPTER 16
BENEFACTOR

THE MEN WHO WORK AT THE PALACE...
THEY USE WORDS TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY AND USE STRENGTH TO PROTECT IT, BRINGING ALL KINDS OF BRILLIANT MEN FROM THE KINGDOM, AND THEY ALL HAVE AMAZING TALENTS
BUT....HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT FROM ME?

THE WOMEN INSIDE THE PALACE
THEY HAD WHITE SKIN AND BEAUTIFUL HAIR, AND THEIR CLOTHES WERE FASHIONABLE, THEIR HEARTS WERE GENTLE AND EVER CHANGING LIKE THE SNOW IN THE WIND
BUT.... HOW AM I ANYTHING LIKE THEM?

MOTHER... WHY DID YOU SEND ME INTO THE MALE'S SOCIETY, INSTEAD OF KEEPING ME AT YOUR SIDE?
YOU PROBABLY NEVER EVEN EXPECTED THAT I WOULD...
ENCOUNTER THE DAYS WHEN I WOULD BE TROUBLED WITH THESE SORTS OF PROBLEMS THAT I CANNOT FIX MYSELF
YOU CANNOT GO OUT WITH THE GUYS FOR A WHILE!
YOU HAVE TO REST FOR A COUPLE DAYS
違う…
I UNDERSTAND, PERFECTLY, WHAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US IS
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?

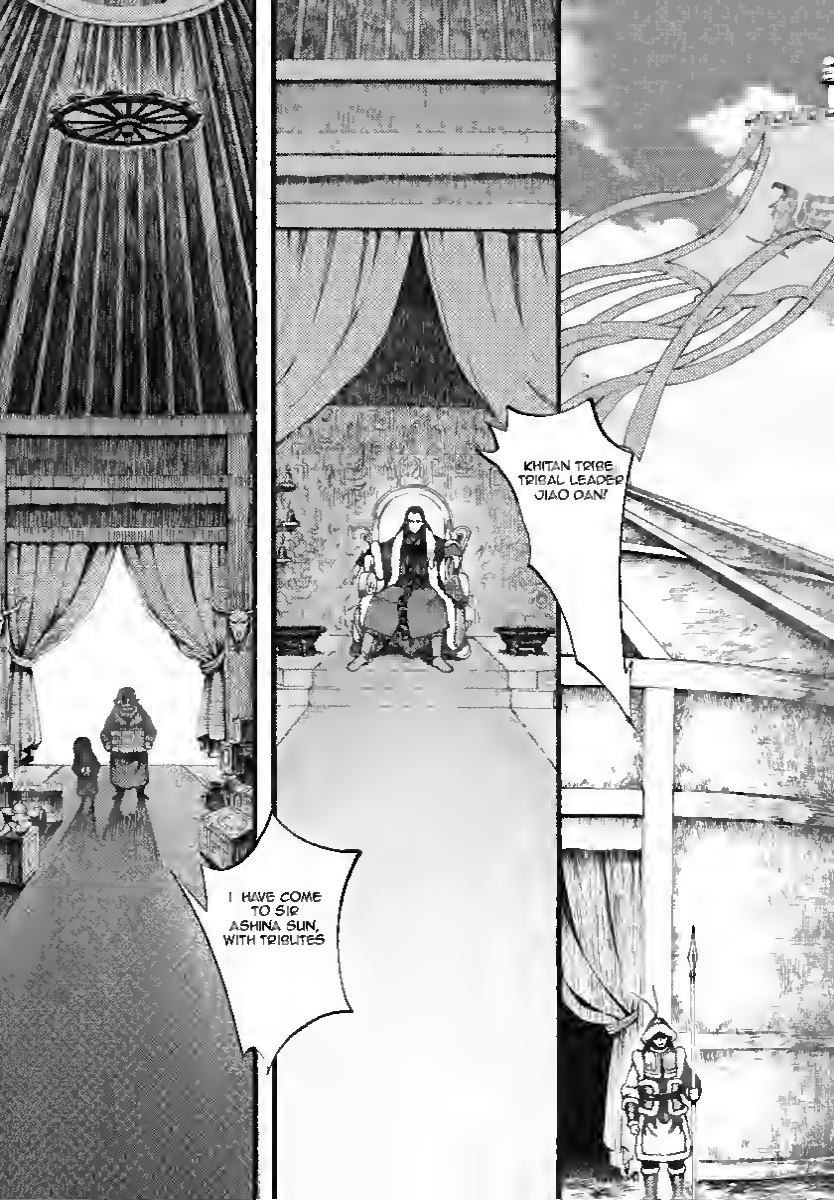

TAKE A LOOK
I AM JUST A COWARD
WINTER IS ALMOST OVER
IN THESE CHAOTIC TIMES,
COMPARED TO HER, WHO IS LIVING THE LIFE OF A WOMAN, WITH DIGNITY AND STRENGTH
HERE

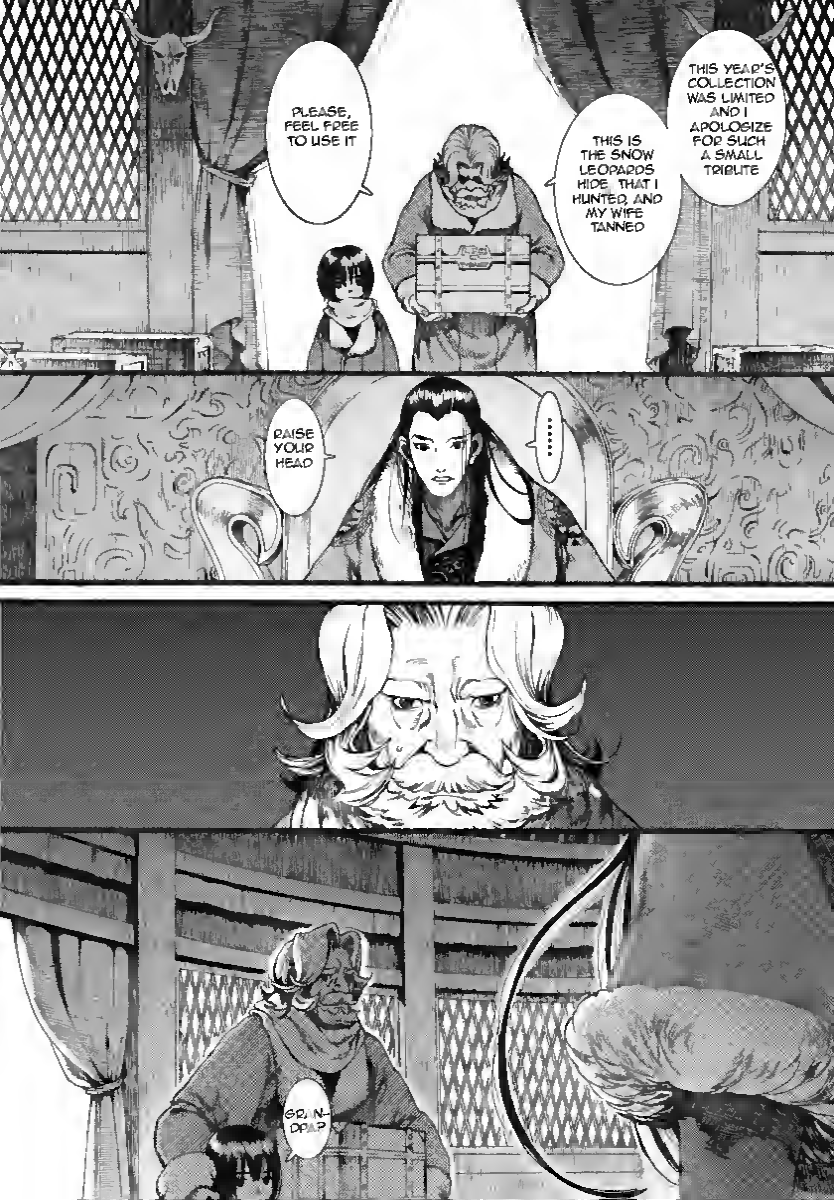
MANA TRIBE TRIBAL LEADER, HAS ARRIVED!
CHITERA TRIBE, TRIBAL LEADER HAS ARRIVED!
YANHAN TRIBE TRIBAL LEADER HAS ARRIVED!
REMEMBER THEM WELL, WE WILL BE DEALING WITH THEIR TRIBUTES AND SOLDIERS FROM NOW ON
YES
THEY'RE MOSTLY TURKS, BUT THERE ARE SOME KEI AND KHITAN AS WELL
THEY LIVE WITHT HEIR FAMILIES, AND THE TRIBAL LEADER IS THE HIGHEST RANK AMONGST THEIR TRIBE

TREAT THE TURKS WITH RESPECT
AND THE KEI AND KHITAN WITH... WELL, JUST TREAT THEM HOWEVER YOU WISH
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, EXACTLY?
YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO KEEP A HERD OF SHEEP IN LINE?
IF THEY DON'T FOLLOW YOU JUST KILL THE SHEEP AT THE FRONT OF THE LINE
.....
RIGHT.
ゴクッ

I TOLD YOU TO EAT UP WHEN WE LEFT, WE HAVE PLENTY OF FOOD TO FEED THE LIKES OF YOU
I'M NOT HUNGRY
YOU D*MN HARD HEADED FOOL, HERE, EAT!
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA EAT?
YOU SEE THEM COOKING MEAT OVER THERE?
DON'T EAT TOO MUCH, RIGHT NOW
KHITAN PIKI TRIBE... TRIBAL LEADER, HAS ARRIVED!
IS THAT PERSON A TRIBAL LEADER AS WELL?
DO YOU THINK THAT EVERYONE CAN EAT A FULL BELLLY'S WORTH, EVERY DAY, LIKE YOU DO?

HELPING WITH THE COOKING
I GOT SOME SHEEP'S THIGH MEAT JUST FOR YOU, THE SOFTEST PART OF THE SHEEPS BODY
WHY'RE YOU HERE?
WHAT WE'RE YOU SAYING BEFORE?
THEY'RE KHITAN, RIGHT?
IF THEY GIVE TRIBUTE, EVERY YEAR, THEY WON'T HAVE MUCH LEFT FOR THEMSELVES
THAT'S WHY THE TURKS ARE CAPABLE OF EATING SO MUCH, EVERY DAY
IF THIS CONTINUES, THERE'LL BE PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE
I SEE...
THE THIGH MEAT IS IN THE CARRIAGE, DON'T FORGET TO EAT IT
BUT I MAY BE ABLE TO USE THIS TO MY ADVANTAGE, IN THE LONG RUN...


KHITAN TRIBE TRIBAL LEADER JIAO DAN!
I HAVE COME TO SIR ASHINA SUN, WITH TRIBUTES


PLEASE, FEEL FREE TO USE IT
THIS IS THE SNOW LEOPARDS HIDE THAT I HUNTED, AND MY WIFE TANNED
THIS YEAR'S COLLECTION WAS LIMITED AND I APOLOGIZE FOR SUCH A SMALL TRIBUTE
RAISE YOUR HEAD
.....
SIR, N-DPHP

JIAO DAN?
YOU'RE THE WARRIOR JIAO DAN RIGHT?
SUN
SO YOU REMEMBER WHO I AM?

GRAN-DPA?
HOW COULD I FORGET
THE WARRIOR JIAO DAN, WHO SAVED ME FROM THE FANGS OF A WOLF
THE REASON I AM ALIVE IS THANKS TO YOU
I DID NOT THINK...
AN OLD GEEZER LIKE MYSELF
THAT YOU HAD REMEM-BERED!

COME LET'S CATCH UP
MILITARY ADVISOR LI
LEAVE THE REST OF THIS STUFF FOR LATER
GO AND BRING SUN SOME WINE AND MEAT
AND GUARD THE OUTSIDE OF HIS TENT, LET NO ONE ENTER
RIGHT
WHAT IS MY LORD UP TO...?

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAS HAPPENED
I'LL GO IN HIS STEAD
THE BANQUET WITH THE OTHER TRIBAL LEADERS IS ABOUT TO BEGIN
APPARENTLY HE'S TALKING WITH AN OLD FRIEND OF HIS
RIGHT
MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES OR ANYTHING
IN ANY CASE, BE CAREFUL OF SUN
I SEARCHED THOROUGHLY ALONG THE BORDERS BUT I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND WHERE YOU ARE, WARRIOR JIAO DAN
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE OF KHITAN DESCENT

GENERAL
YOU DID NOT KNOW THAT I WAS A KHITAN?
PLEASE CALL ME SUN
I WAS ONLY 5 YEARS OLD
WHEN YOU FINISHED YOUR GUARD DUTY, I HAD A MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT HALF A MONTH AFTER YOU HAD LEFT
MY DAD TOLD ME THAT YOU HAD LEFT TO GO BACK TO YOUR HOME-LAND
SO I JUST ASSUMED THAT YOU WERE A TURK
I SEE

TODAY
タン
ゴク
ゴク
THAT I WAS ABLE TO MEET YOU HERE, AGAIN
I AM VERY HAPPY
YOU HAVE GROWN UP TO BECOME SUCH A STRONG, DEPENDABLE MAN
JUST LIKE YOUR...
COUGH.

JIAO DAN, YOU KNOW OF MY PARENTS?
YOUR FATHER WAS JILI, THE GREAT KHAN
I REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE THIS LITTLE
THERE IS NOTHING I DO NOT KNOW ABOUT HIM
.....

THANK YOU FOR THIS FEAST, TODAY
HOWEVER, AS I HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE YOU IN RETURN,
EXCUSE ME
I SHALL PRAY
FOR YOUR GOOD FORTUNE IN BATTLE EVERY DAY, MY GENERAL

WERE YOU LISTENING?
HE DIDN'T ASK ME FOR ANYTHING
.....
.....
EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER,
JIAO DAN WAS MY PERSONAL BODY GUARD

BACK THEN, EVERYONE WAS CALLING HIM "THE WARRIOR, JIAO DAN"
IT APPEARS THAT HE HAS GROWN OLD AND CANNOT EVEN HUNT VERY WELL
BUT I KNEW IT WAS HIM, FROM THE MOMENT I SAW HIM
YET
HE STILL DIDN'T ASK ME FOR ANY FAVORS
MY LORD
EVEN IF YOU CAN SAVE HIM
ARE YOU CAPABLE OF SAVING HIS ENTIRE TRIBE?

WILL YOU BE ABLE TO SAVE THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF KHITAN?
EVEN IF YOU SAVE HIS TRIBE
THAT'S WHY HE DIDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING
HE KNEW THAT
IT'S NOT ENTIRELY UNTRUE TO ME,
BUT THE DEFINITION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE THE "STRONGEST", HAS CHANGED, FOR ME
I HAD THOUGHT THAT WAY AS WELL, IN THE PAST
BUT, NOW I FEEL DIFFERENTLY
IN THIS WORLD, ONLY THE STRONG HAVE THE RIGHT TO SURVIVE

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, IS TRUE?
.....
I'M NOT NEARLY AS SMART AS YOU THINK I AM
BUT MY TEACHER DID TELL ME SOMETHING, WHEN I WAS A CHILD
NOTHING IN THIS WORLD, IS COMPLETELY NEW
THAT'S WHY WE STUDY HISTORY
AND COMPARE TODAY, WITH THE PAST
SO THE HAN AND THE TURKS, ARE THE SAME?

I THINK SO, YES
AND NOT JUST THE HAN AND THE TURKS.
THE KEI AND THE KHITAN AND THE UYGHUR ARE ALL THE SAME
IN THE END, EVERY HUMAN BEING, HAS THE SAME WAY OF THINKING

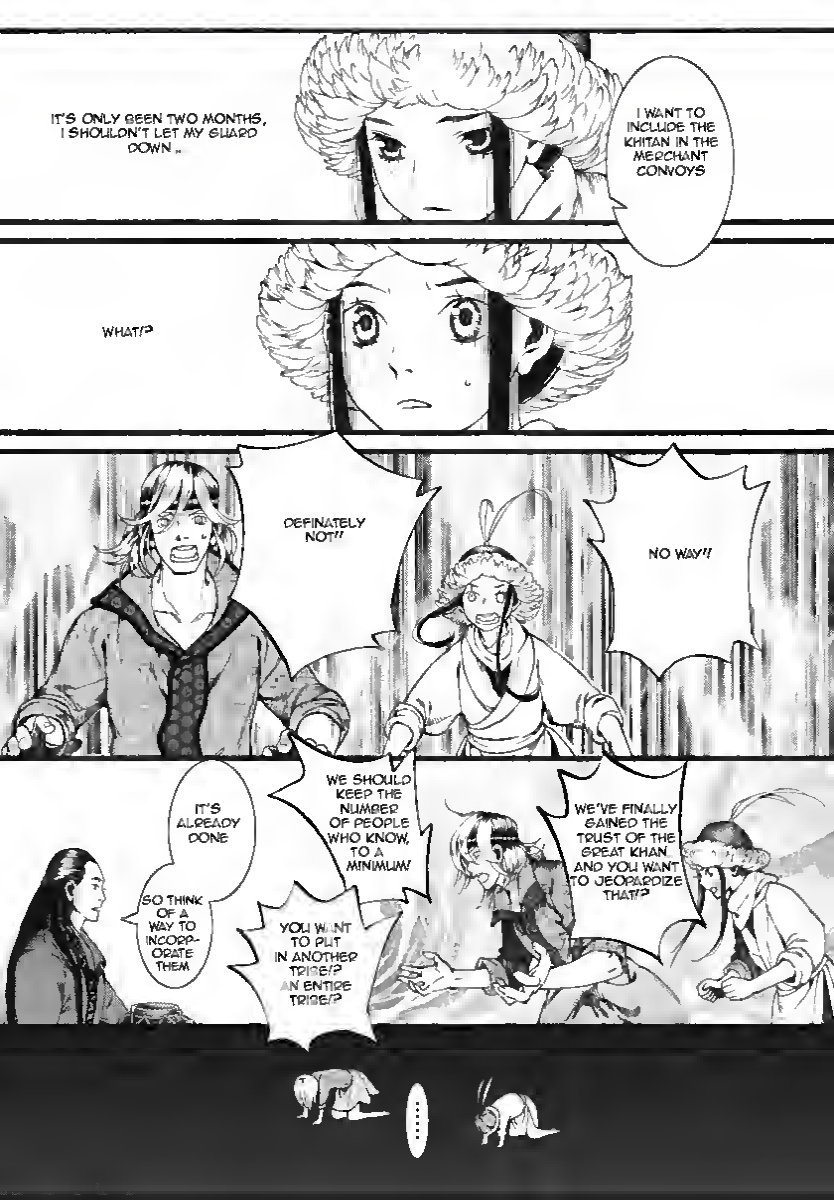
MIMI
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP
HERE'S SOME TEA
THANK YOU
MIMI, HOW IS YOUR HUSBAND DOING?
LOOKS LIKE WINTERS FINALLY OVER
IF IT DOESN'T END, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FEED OUR LIVE-STOCK
I WAS WORRIED THAT HE WOULDN'T SURVIVE THE WINTER
YEAH THE HAN ARE SO FRAIL HE IS 15 YEARS OLD AND HIS BODY IS STILL SO SMALL
IF YOU WANT...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME MARRY INTO OUR HOUSE?

IT'S FINE
HE'S GOTTEN BETTER, NOW

バス
I'M HUNGRY
LET'S GO FIND A PLACE TO START A FIRE
HUH? WE'RE NOT GOING BACK TO CAMP?
SINCE HE BROUGHT WINE WITH HIM,
THERE'S NO WAY WE'RE HEADING BACK
RABBITS AREN'T ENOUGH!
I WANT TO EAT SHEEP!
……
……
YOU BROUGHT SPICES TOO, I SEE

MUJIN-SAN YOU'RE GOOD AT COOKING
DION'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE
I DO ALL THE JOBS THAT WOMEN USUALLY DO
.....
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ASK
BUT WE CAN'T TRUST THE WOMEN THAT ARE SENT TO US
8 OUT OF 10 TIMES, THEY BETRAY US
WHAT ABOUT RELEASING THEM?
IT'S NOT ENTIRELY IMPOSSIBLE, BUT ONLY IF WE CAN ENSURE THE WOMEN WON'T TALK, AND THAT WE WON'T BUY THE WRATH OF THE HUSBANDS WHO SENT THEM TO US IN THE FIRST PLACE
AT A PLACE LIKE THIS,
THE GREAT KHAN, PROBABLY WON'T BE SENDING US ANY WOMEN

I WONDER IF THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN WERE ABLE TO CONTACT QIN....

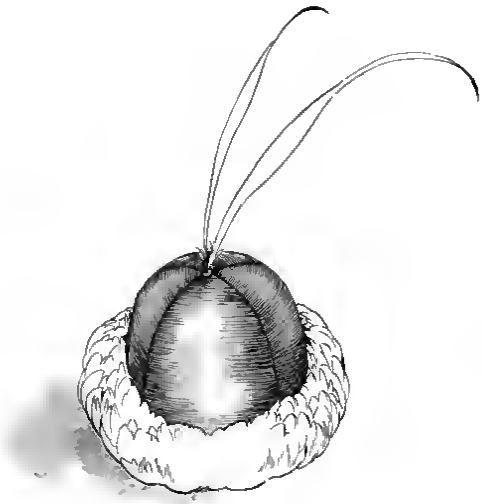

IT'S ONLY BEEN TWO MONTHS, I SHOULDN'T LET MY GUARD DOWN..
I WANT TO INCLUDE THE KHITAN IN THE MERCHANT CONVOYS
WHAT!?
DEFINATELY NOT!!
NO WAY!!
WE SHOULD KEEP THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO KNOW, TO A MINIMUM!
WE'VE FINALLY GAINED THE TRUST OF THE GREAT KHAN AND YOU WANT TO JEOPARDIZE THAT!?
IT'S ALREADY DONE
SO THINK OF A WAY TO INCORPORATE THEM
YOU WANT TO PUT IN ANOTHER TRIBE!? AN ENTIRE TRIBE!?
!

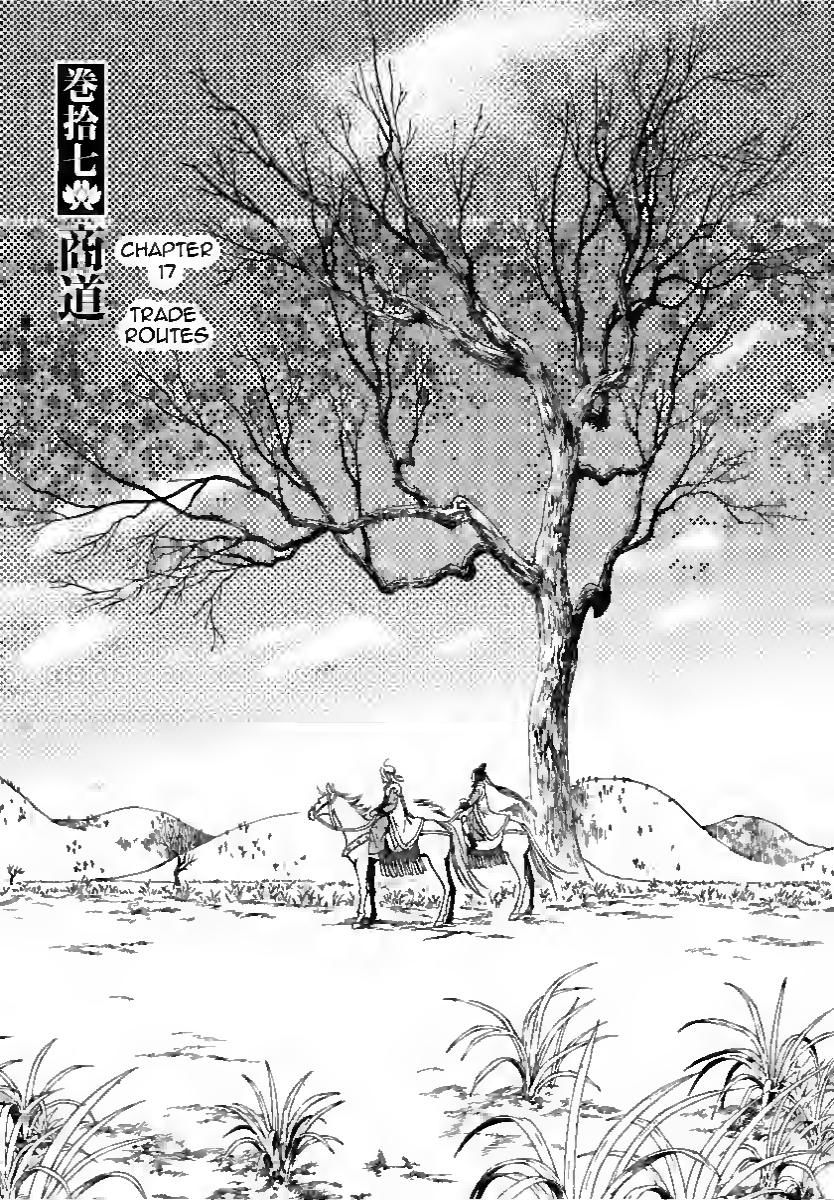
I WILL NOT BETRAY MY FATHER
BUT I ALSO MUST PAY TRIBUTE TO THEM
AT THE VERY LEAST, I WANT THEM TO FIND A NEW WAY OF LIFE
IS THAT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO REPAY JIAO DAN?
YES
YOU WANT TO RISK IT ALL,
JUST TO REPAY A SINGLE PERSON?

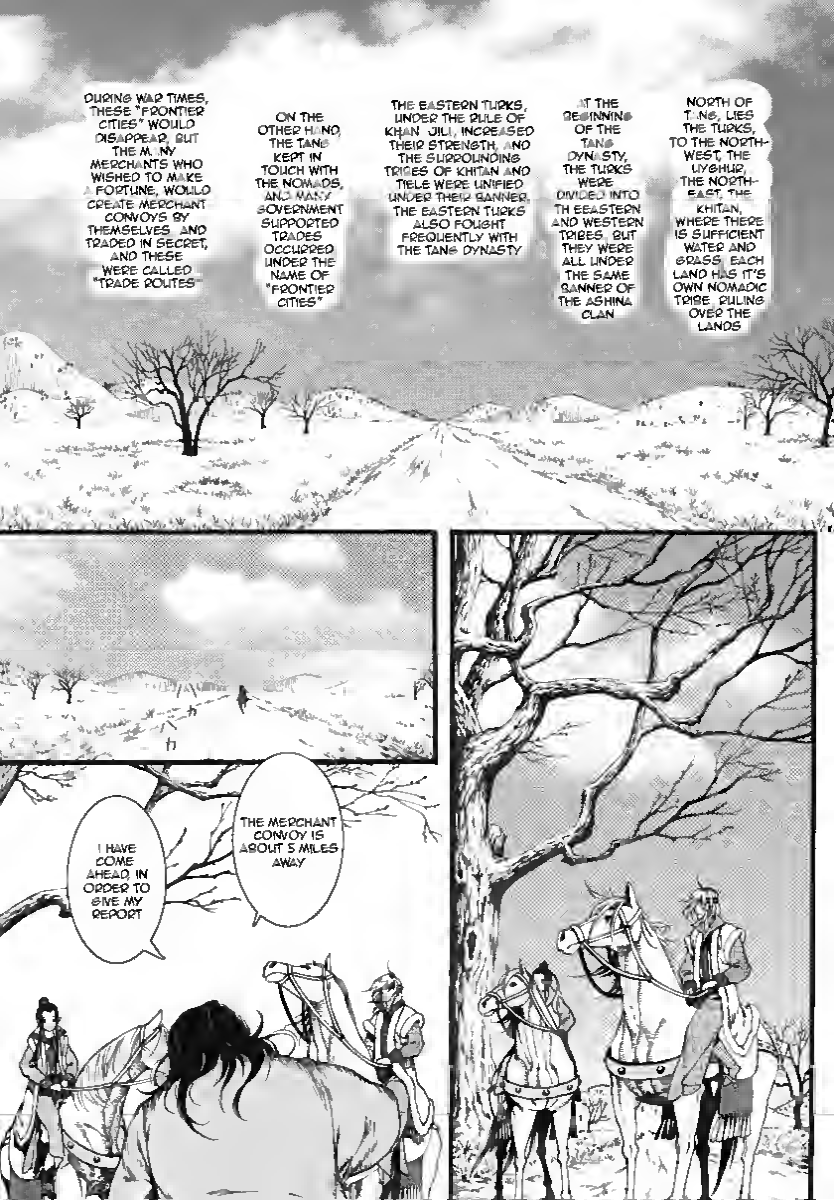
THAT'S RIGHT
ANY OTHER QUESTIONS ?
I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD
WHY I FELT JEALOUS OF THIS PERSON
LIVING IN THE SAME ENVIRONMENT
WHERE WE WILL LOSE OUR LIVES, IF WE LET OUR GUARD DOWN FOR EVEN A SECOND
AND YET...
THIS MAN, LIVES ACCORDING TO THE WHIMS OF HIS OWN HEART

AIZEN HERE

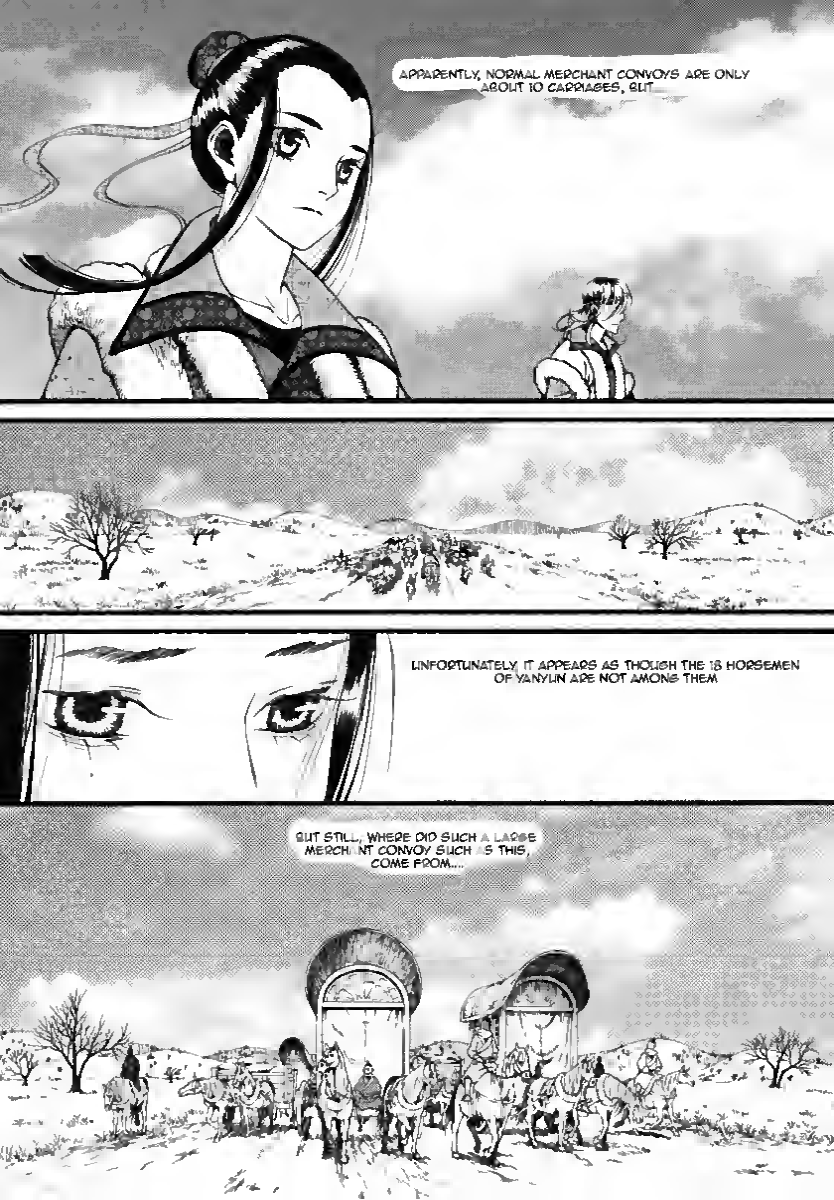
2 MORE CHAPTERS
AND THIS VOLUME
IS DONE...




卷拾七
商道
CHAPTER
17
TRADE
ROUTES


DURING WAR TIMES, THESE "FRONTIER CITIES" WOULD DISAPPEAR, BUT THE MANY MERCHANTS WHO WISHED TO MAKE A FORTUNE, WOULD CREATE MERCHANT CONVOYS BY THEMSELVES AND TRADED IN SECRET, AND THESE WERE CALLED "TRADE ROUTES"
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TANG KEPT IN TOUCH WITH THE NOMADS, AND MANY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED TRADES OCCURRED UNDER THE NAME OF "FRONTIER CITIES"
THE EASTERN TURKS, UNDER THE RULE OF KHAN JIELI, INCREASED THEIR STRENGTH, AND THE SURROUNDING TRIBES OF KHITAN AND TIELE WERE UNIFIED UNDER THEIR BANNER. THE EASTERN TURKS ALSO FOUGHT FREQUENTLY WITH THE TANG DYNASTY
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TANG DYNASTY, THE TURKS WERE DIVIDED INTO TH EEASTERN AND WESTERN TRIBES. BUT THEY WERE ALL UNDER THE SAME BANNER OF THE ASHINA CLAN
NORTH OF TANG, LIES THE TURKS, TO THE NORTH-WEST, THE UYGHUR, THE NORTH-EAST, THE KHITAN, WHERE THERE IS SUFFICIENT WATER AND GRASS, EACH LAND HAS IT'S OWN NOMADIC TRIBE RULING OVER THE LANDS
THE MERCHANT CONVOY IS ABOUT 5 MILES AWAY
I HAVE COME AHEAD IN ORDER TO GIVE MY REPORT

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN YOUR CONVOY? HOW MANY CARRIAGES?
ABOUT A HUNDRED, WITH 20 CARRIAGES
WE WILL GO AND WAIT FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE CONVOY AND THEN GO BACK OUT TO RETRIEVE THE GOODS
THE REST OF THE GOODS, ARE STACKED ONTO 10 OTHER CARRIAGES THAT WILL ARRIVE IN 10 DAYS
THIS IS QUITE AMAZING
ARE THE TENTS READY?
YES, THEY ARE
IF WE SUCCEED IN THIS, OUR TRADE ROUTE WILL BE SECURED, DON'T LET THIS FAIL
RIGHT


APPARENTLY, NORMAL MERCHANT CONVOYS ARE ONLY ABOUT 10 CARRIAGES, BUT...
UNFORTUNATELY, IT APPEARS AS THOUGH THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYLIN ARE NOT AMONG THEM
BUT STILL, WHERE DID SUCH A LARGE MERCHANT CONVOY SUCH AS THIS, COME FROM...

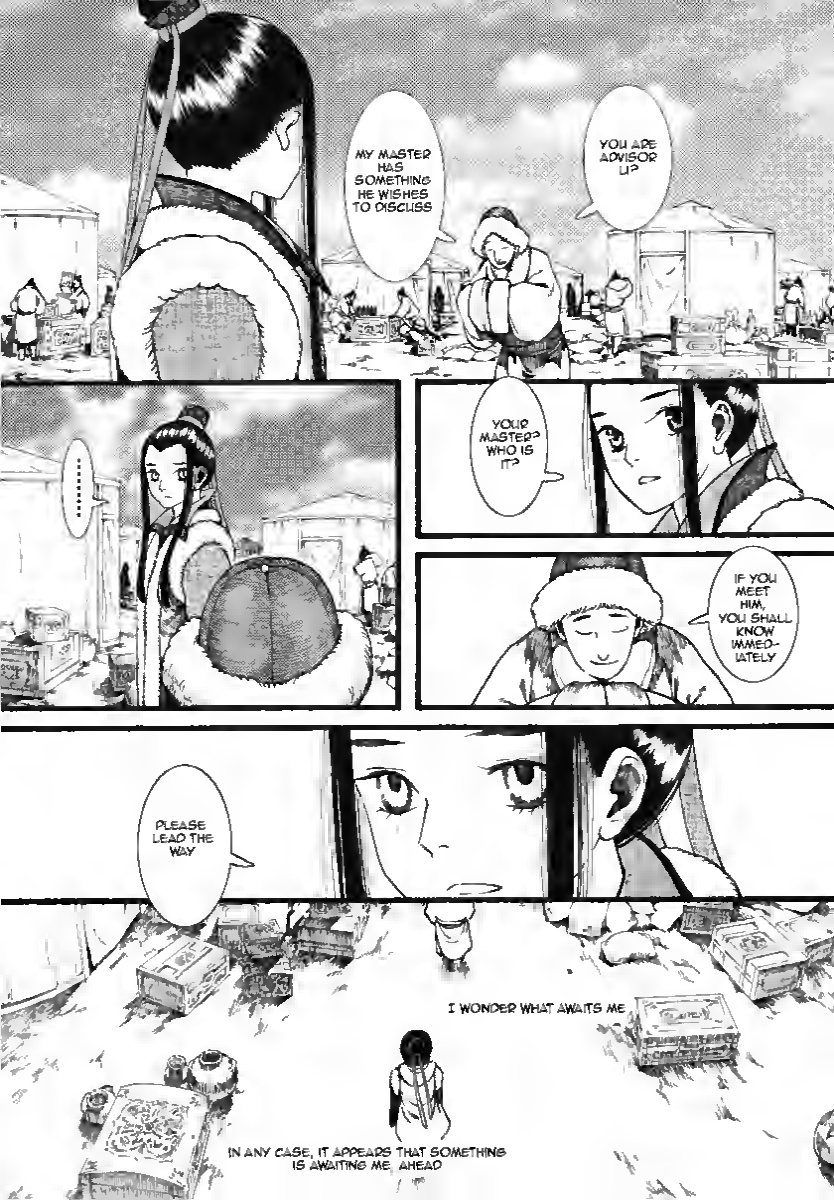
WELCOME, VISITORS FROM FAR AWAY
OUR GENERAL HAS SET UP TENTS AND FOOD FOR YOU TO ENJOY AND REST IN
WILL YOU BE EATING FIRST? OR WILL YOU BE RESTING
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY, HOWEVER WE WOULD LIKE TO FIRST GREET THE GENERAL
THE REST OF OUR CONVOY HAS SOME CLEANING UP TO DO

VERY WELL, PLEASE FOLLOW ME
AS FOR THE REST OF YOU, THIS PERSON WILL BE IN CHARGE OF TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEEDS
WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED COME BY THE MAIN HQ AFTERWARDS
YES
WELL THEN
PLEASE FOLLOW ME
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CLEAN YOURSELVES UP IN THE STREAM AHEAD

NO NEED TO WORRY
IT'S NOT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE FRONTIER CITIES YOU'VE BEEN TO. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE CAREFUL, CAUSE THERE'S MORE PROFIT INVOLVED
YOU'VE MADE PREPARATIONS, RIGHT?
.....
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT PUTTING YOURSELF IN DANGER?

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T PUT US IN DANGER?
ALRIGHT...
I SHALL GO AND GREET THEM
GEN-ERAL
THEY HAVE ARRIVED
DON'T WORRY
I'M NOT VERY USED TO TRADING EITHER BUT...

WE HAVE THOSE TWO WITH US
YOU WILL NOT BE AT A LOSS WITH THIS
IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS, PLEASE TELL ME
NO, NO
MILITARY ADVISOR, THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK
ADVISOR LI


YOU ARE ADVISOR LI?
MY MASTER HAS SOMETHING HE WISHES TO DISCUSS
.....
YOUR MASTER? WHO IS IT?
IF YOU MEET HIM, YOU SHALL KNOW IMMEDIATELY
PLEASE LEAD THE WAY
I WONDER WHAT AWAITS ME
IN ANY CASE, IT APPEARS THAT SOMETHING IS AWAITING ME, AHEAD

ESPECIALLY THE SURROUNDINGS OF THAT TENT OVER THERE, IS QUITE WELL GUARDED
ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS MESSY...
IT'S ALL ACTUALLY WELL ORGANIZED AND SECURED
IS HIS MASTER, INSIDE THAT TENT?
PLEASE ENTER MR. ADVISOR
I AM A BIT CURIOUS

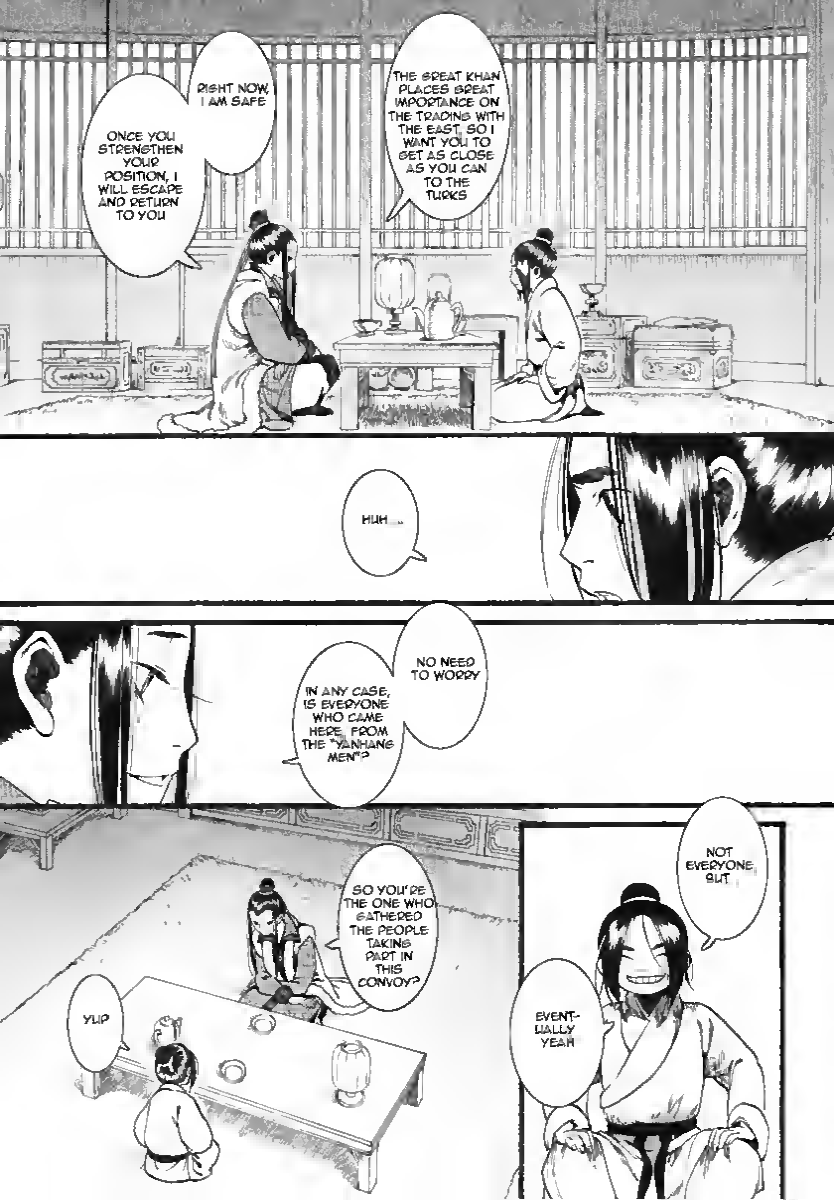
I AM SORRY
THAT I COULD NOT BE AT MY MASTERS SIDE DURING THIS TIME OF HARDSHIP
PLEASE PUNISH ME ACCOR-DINGLY

OWEWE
I'M SEEING RIGHT THROUGH YOUR DECEPTION. YOU'RE THINKING "I'M AMAZING, I'M SO SMART, SO PLEASE PRAISE ME, PRAISE ME"
YOU'RE SO PRETENTIOUS
DON'T I DESERVE SOME PRAISE!
YOU'RE NOT AT ALL LIKE A REAL MASTER
SHUT UP
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BROWN
OF COURSE
IT'S MY TALENT, I'M TALENTED
.....

IT'S TAKEN A LONG TIME, BUT...

I'M FINALLY BEGINNING TO SEE IT...

SO THE 18 HORSEMEN OF YANYUN WAS ABLE TO CONTACT YOU?
AND YOU GUYS WERE ABLE TO CREATE A TRADE CONVOY SO QUICKLY
OLD MAN QIN IS AMAZING! OUR CONVOY THE YANHANG MEN IS NOW WELL KNOWN
ONCE YOU RETURN BACK THERE, YOU'LL BE AMAZED!
SO BACK AND TELL QIN TO PUT HIS ALL INTO OPENING NEW TRADE ROUTES
DON'T BE STUPID
BUT THE OLD MAN SAID THAT NOW'S NOT THE TIME FOR YOU TO COME BACK, YET
YOU SHOULD JUST RUN AWAY FROM THESE GUYS


THE GREAT KHAN PLACES GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THE TRADING WITH THE EAST, SO I WANT YOU TO GET AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN TO THE TURKS
RIGHT NOW, I AM SAFE
ONCE YOU STRENGTHEN YOUR POSITION, I WILL ESCAPE AND RETURN TO YOU
HUH...
NO NEED TO WORRY
IN ANY CASE, IS EVERYONE WHO CAME HERE FROM THE "YANHANG MEN"?
NOT EVERYONE, BUT
EVENTUALLY YEAH
SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO GATHERED THE PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THIS CONVOY?
YUP

MASTER
WHY AREN'T YOU PRAISING ME DIRECTLY?
IT LOOKS LIKE QIN HAS TAUGHT YOU QUITE A BIT
ALRIGHT, I NEED TO GET BACK TO THE MAIN CAMP
TAKE CARE
YOU'VE DONE WELL
WORTHY OF BEING MY DISCIPLE
HMPH

LADY JIN SE?
SORRY
MY MIND WAS WANDERING

FIRST, PLEASE VIEW THIS
IT IS A REPORT ON ASHINA SUN, THAT OUR SPIES HAVE SENT
HM...
ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT SPEAK OF WHERE LIU YUN IS,
DO YOU NOT THINK THAT THIS REPORT IS INTERESTING, NONE THE LESS?
TO NOT ONLY HELP THE KHITAN TRIBE, BUT TO ALSO OPEN UP A TRADE ROUTE
IT APPEARS AS THOUGH THE GREAT KHAN HAS BEEN BITTEN BY HIS OWN DOG

DOES ASHINA SUN. BELIEVE HE HAS BETRAYED THE GREAT KHAN, I WONDER?
NO
HE JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HIS POSITION. AND THATS WHY HE DOES SOMETHING STUPID LIKE THIS THAT JEOPARDIZES HIS POSITION WITH THE KHAN
IN ANY CASE, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HE, OR WE THINK
THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS WHAT THE GREAT KAHN WILL THINK, WHEN HE HEARS THIS
I'M GOING TO THE GREAT KHAN TOMORROW
ARE YOU COMING WITH?
YOU'RE BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE A HAN
.....

ARE YOU NOSTALGIC ABOUT YOUR HOMELAND?
WELL...
ARE YOU PRAISING ME?
LUOYANG AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IS WARM AND THE FLOWERS ARE AT FULL BLOOM
SOME-TIMES
DO YOU WANT TO GO BACK?

NO
THE LUOYANG THAT I KNEW BURNED TO ASHES ALONGSIDE MY COUNTRY
.....

MUMI
THE MERCHANTS BROUGHT THEM ALONG
WANNA EAT SOME CANDIES FROM HAN?

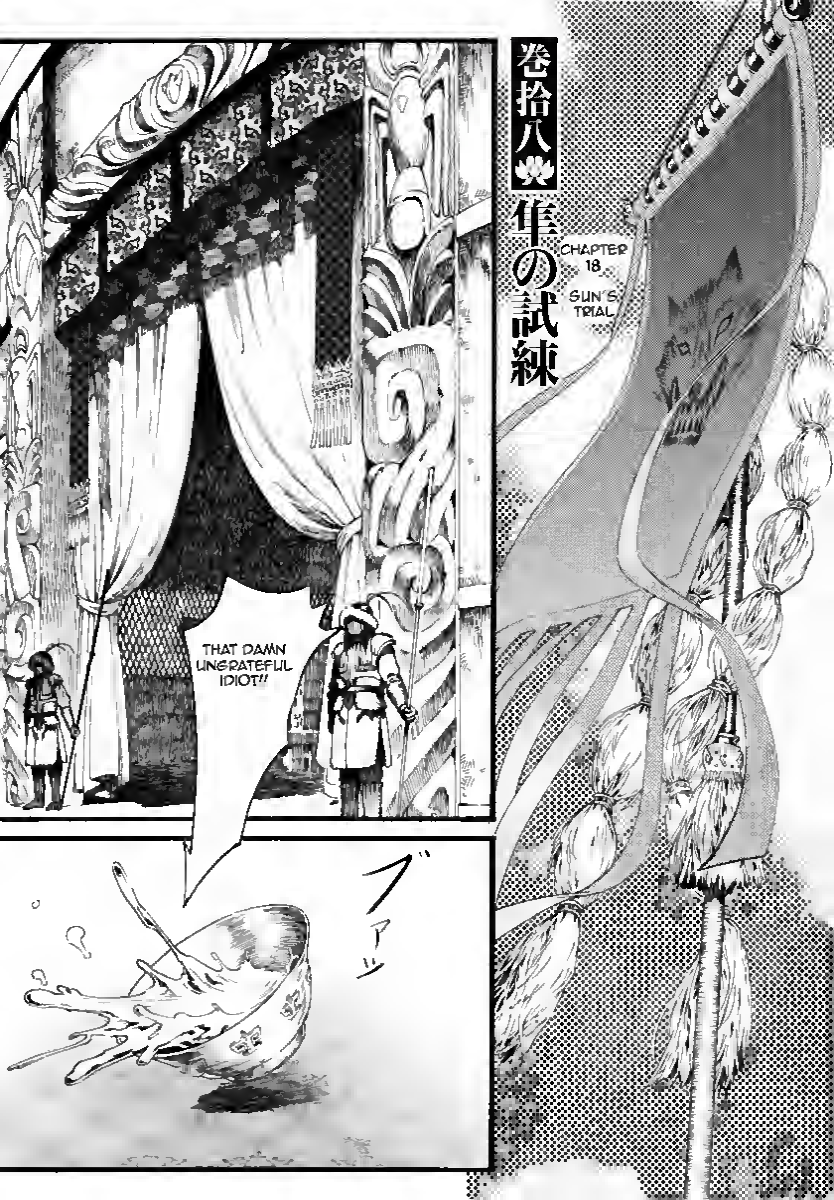
EVERYONE'S STILL DRINKING, BUT I CAME BACK
YOU FINISHED YOUR WORK?
IS THIS ... FOOD?
THAT'S A CHERRY BLOSSOM CANDY
THOSE TYPES OF CHEAP SWEETS ARE EVERYWHERE
YOU'VE BEEN EATING THESE SINCE YOU WERE LITTLE?
.....HM

IT'S TOO AMAZINGLY GOOD!!
YOU'RE OVER REACTING!
RIGHT. THEY DON'T HAVE THAT MANY SWEETS OVER HERE
.....
WHEN ARE YOU GOING HOME?
THE PEOPLE WHO CAME, ARE ALL HAN RIGHT?

IT'S NOT THE TIME YET
I'M NOT GOING YET
OH, SO YOU WANT TO GET RID OF ME?
SHUT UP!
YOU SHOULD DO IT BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND!
THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY
I'LL GLADLY HELP YOU
GRANDPA

.....
WHY ARE WE HELPING THE TURKS
THE TURKS WERE THE ONES WHO KILLED THE KHITEN MEN AND STOLE OUR WOMEN AND LIVESTOCK
SO WHY ARE WE HELPING THEM?
RIGHT NOW WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE BEING HELPED
BUT WE'RE SURVIVING JUST FINE BY OUR SELVES
WHY DO WE HAVE TO ACCEPT THE PITY OF OUR ENEMIES!
MASTER SUN IS NOT OUR ENEMY

WHY?
IS IT BECAUSE YOU SAVED THAT ALLY'S LIFE?
LISTEN CLOSELY
ALTAI, MY GRANDSON
HE IS APART OF OUR TRIBE
WHATEVER HAPPENS, MASTER SUN WILL NEVER BE YOUR ENEMY


巻拾八
隼の試練
CHAPTER 18
SUN'S TRIAL
THAT DAMN UNGRATEFUL IDIOT!!
ブァッ

PLEASE, CALM DOWN
EASTERN TURKS, JILI, THE GREAT KHAN
IS THAT STORY TRUE!?

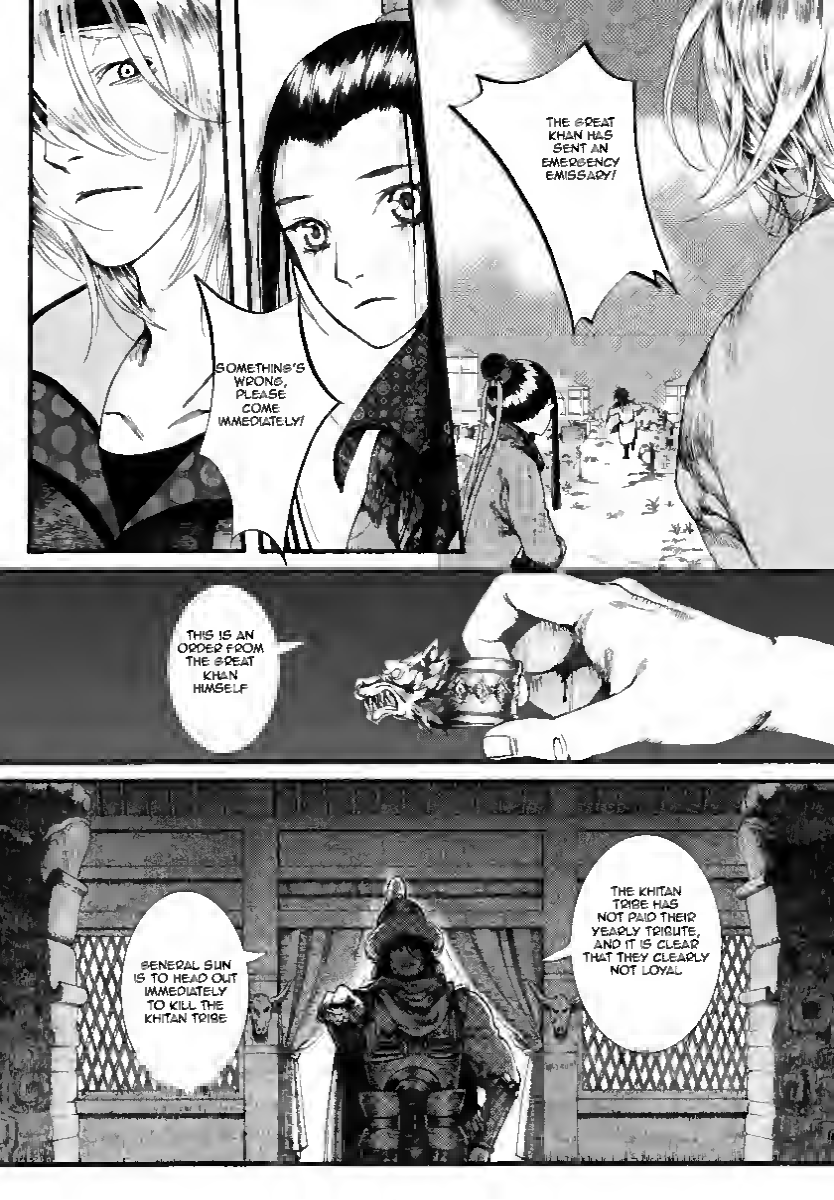
AS THE KHAN IS AWARE I HAVE BEEN KEEPING SUN'S MOVEMENTS IN CHECK
THIS INFO WAS GIVEN TO ME AT GREAT EXPENSE, SO IT IS MOST DEFINATLEY ACCURATE
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
W...WE ARE ONLY LOWLY MERCHANTS
WE COULD NOT POSSIBLY SAY ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR FAMILY..

I DO NOT MIND TALK!
I DO NOT KNOW WHY GENERAL SUN HAS ALLIED WITH THE KHITAN, BUT...
IT IS A FACT THAT GENERAL SUN IS PUTTING GREAT EFFORT INTO TRADING OPERATIONS
KHAN
IF YOU ORDER ME TO...

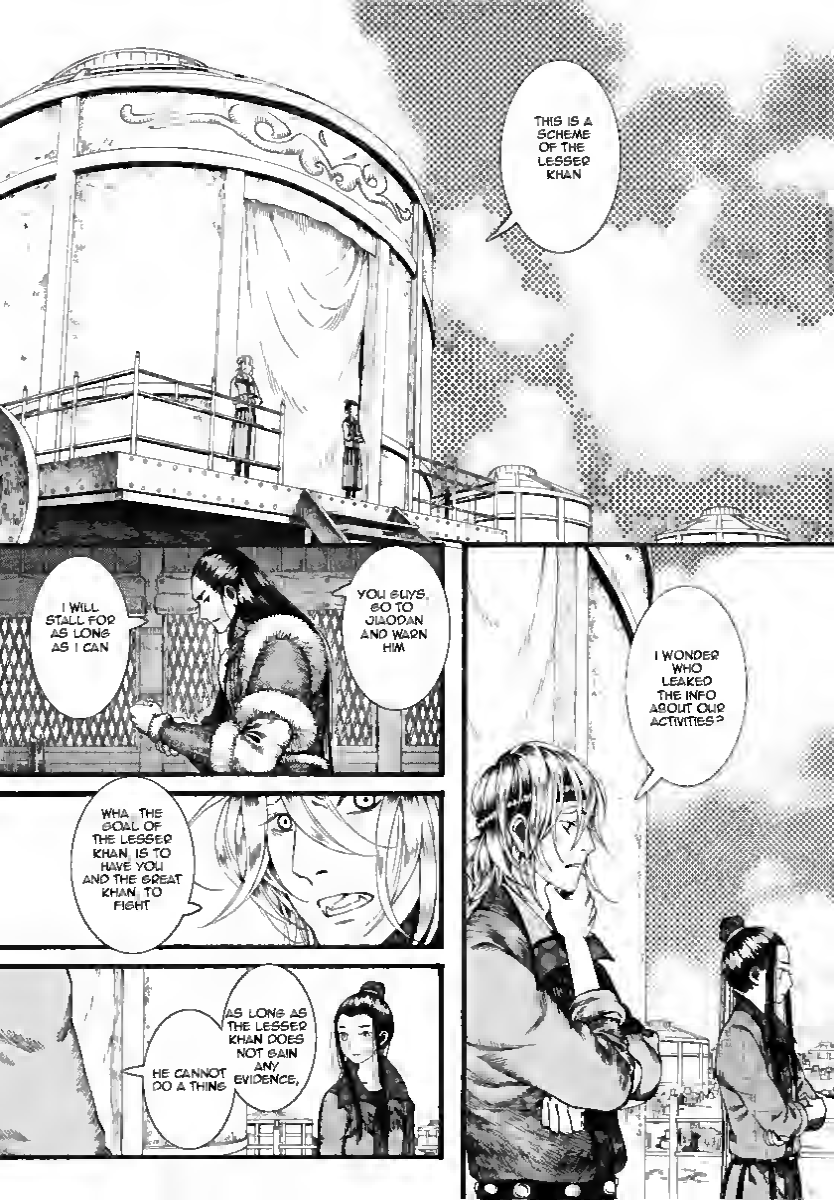
WE SHOULD HAVE SUN SO OUT AND SLAUGHTER THE KHITAN, WHO ARE NOT GIVING PROPER TRIBUTE TO HIM. TO UPHOLD THE NOTORITY OF THE TURKS
THEN, THE KHAN CAN REST EASY, CAN HE NOT?
.....
AL-RIGHT
YOU, GO OUT WITH YOUR TROOPS IMMEDIATELY
HAVE ASHINA SUN SLAUGHTER THE KHITAN
IF HE DOES NOT OBEY, THEN KILL HIM ALONGSIDE THE KHITAN

IT'S FINALLY OVER
WE DID GOOD THIS TIME. WE'LL PROBABLY BE REWARDED WELL
CAN I RECEIVE A COUPLE DAYS OF REST?
DOUBT IT. WE STILL NEED TO FINISH CLEANING UP THE STORAGE BOXES AND CATALOGUE THEM
HUH. I THOUGHT THAT WAS YOUR JOB?
IN ANY CASE DID THE MERCHANT CONVOY PASS THE BORDER ALREADY?

I FORGOT TO TELL THEM SOMETHING
THEY SHOULD'VE, BY NOW
WHY?
I FORGOT TO TELL THEM TO BRING THE HAN'S HISTORY BOOKS
SUN WANTED TO SEE THEM
LOOKS LIKE OUR LORD HAS GOOD FRIENDS
HE IS QUITE FORTUNATE
THIS IS WHY I HATE THE HAN. THEY SAY SUCH THINGS WITH EASE
SIR MUJIN!
.....
DOES OUR LORD KNOW HOW TO READ CHINESE?
OF COURSE HE CAN'T
BUT HE HATES BEING TAUGHT BY OTHERS, SO HE WILL SLOWLY BUT SURELY, LEARN IT HIMSELF

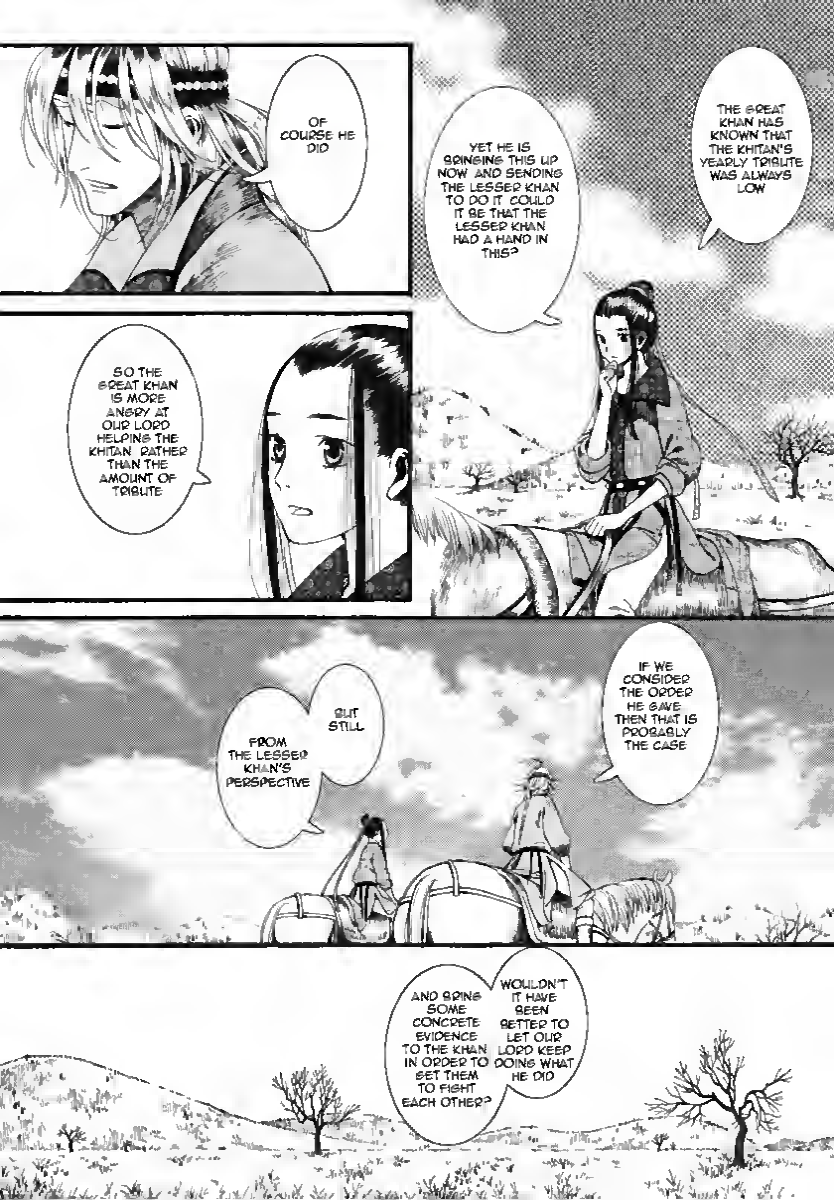

THE GREAT KHAN HAS SENT AN EMERGENCY EMISSARY!
SOMETHING'S WRONG, PLEASE COME IMMEDIATELY!
THIS IS AN ORDER FROM THE GREAT KHAN HIMSELF
THE KHITAN TRIBE HAS NOT PAID THEIR YEARLY TRIBUTE, AND IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY CLEARLY NOT LOYAL
GENERAL SUN IS TO HEAD OUT IMMEDIATELY TO KILL THE KHITAN TRIBE

!
THERE IS NO TIME TO WAIT
PLEASE LEAVE IMMEDIATELY
RIGHT
I SHALL FORM UP A SQUAD IMMEDIATELY
NO NEED!!
THE LESSER KHAN HAS ALREADY FORMED A SMALL SQUAD ALL THE GENERAL HAS TO DO IS TO BRING HIS PERSONAL GUARD AND HEAD THERE, IMMEDIATELY
PLEASE MOVE, QUICKLY


THIS IS A SCHEME OF THE LESSER KHAN
YOU GUYS, GO TO JIAODAN AND WARN HIM
I WILL STALL FOR AS LONG AS I CAN
I WONDER WHO LEAKED THE INFO ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES?
WHA... THE GOAL OF THE LESSER KHAN IS TO HAVE YOU AND THE GREAT KHAN TO FIGHT
AS LONG AS THE LESSER KHAN DOES NOT GAIN ANY EVIDENCE,
HE CANNOT DO A THING

I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST THE GREAT KHAN
THERE IS NOTHING FOR ME TO HIDE!
THE THING HE'S WORRIED ABOUT...
IS PROBABLY THAT JIAO DAN WILL NOT RUN AWAY

IT IS IRRELEVANT AS TO WHETHER HE CAN RUN AWAY THE QUESTION HERE IS WHETHER HE WILL RUN AWAY OR NOT
AND HE WON'T BE ABLE TO RUN AWAY WHILE DRAGGING HIS TRIBE ALONG, RIGHT?
HE CANNOT ABANDON HIS TRIBE
THERE ARE MANY PLACES TO HIDE...
THE PLAINS ARE WIDE AND LARGE...
LET'S GO
HUH?
SOMETHING'S WRONG...
THERE'S NO POINT IN THINKING ABOUT IT NOW


OF COURSE HE DID
THE GREAT KHAN HAS KNOWN THAT THE KHITAN'S YEARLY TRIBUTE WAS ALWAYS LOW
YET HE IS BRINGING THIS UP NOW AND SENDING THE LESSER KHAN TO DO IT. COULD IT BE THAT THE LESSER KHAN HAD A HAND IN THIS?
SO THE GREAT KHAN IS MORE ANGRY AT OUR LORD HELPING THE KHITAN RATHER THAN THE AMOUNT OF TRIBUTE
IF WE CONSIDER THE ORDER HE GAVE THEN THAT IS PROBABLY THE CASE
BUT STILL
FROM THE LESSER KHAN'S PERSPECTIVE
WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER TO LET OUR LORD KEEP DOING WHAT HE DID
AND BRING SOME CONCRETE EVIDENCE TO THE KHAN IN ORDER TO SET THEM TO FIGHT EACH OTHER?

IF HE TRIES TO SETTLE THIS BY FORCE LIKE THIS, WOULDN'T THIS GIVE OUR LORD LESS OF A CHANCE TO SCREW UP?
THE HAN AND THE TURKS ARE DIFFERENT IN THEIR CUNNING
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!
IT'S TRUE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THIS
I WILL TAKE A SQUAD TO GO SEARCH FOR SUN
PREPARE FOR BATTLE I'LL LEAVE THE CAMP TO YOU

TONIGHT WE'RE PREPARING FOR BATTLE DON'T GO OUTSIDE
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
OUR LORD AND MUJIN'S MAIN FORCES ARE OUT, SO
JUST AS A PRECAUTION
WHO'S GOING TO ATTACK THIS PLACE?

WAIT
SO EVERYONE'S GONE?
THEN YOU SHOULD RUN!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
.....
WE'LL BE RELIEVED AT SUNRISE
SUCK IT UP!
THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE HERE, ARE OF NO CONCERN TO ME, RIGHT?
SHE'S RIGHT... WHAT AM I WAITING FOR?

I DON'T GET IT
WHY IS THAT HAN HAVING US GUARD THIS CAMP AT NIGHT TIME?
SHUT UP
WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DO IT
WE CAN'T POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT GUY'S THINKING
SIR MUJIN IS PRAISING THAT GUY
SIR MUJIN? YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?
COUGH
IN ANY CASE, LET'S PATROL THE AREA
AH!
SOMEONE'S COMING!
WHO IS IT?
STOP!
I'LL FIRE AN ARROW IF YOU DON'T!

IT'S ONLY A HORSE
HOLD IT!
WHY IS IT COVERED IN BLOOD?
THIS HORSE ISN'T IT THE ONE WE GAVE THE KHITAN?
I WILL NOT RUN... NOT AT A TIME LIKE THIS
THERE'S SOMETHING NEAR IT'S STOMACH
HEY....

I CANNOT LEAVE YOU HERE ALONE EITHER
AND
MILITARY ADVISOR LI!?
MIMI...
I WON'T BE A BURDEN TO YOU, YOU IDIOT!
A SINGLE HORSE HAS JUST WANDERED INTO OUR CAMP, BUT...
ADVISOR, PLEASE COME QUICK!

HE SAYS HE WANTS TO MEET WITH GENERAL SUN!
THIS KID WAS TIED TO THE STOMACH OF THE HORSE, AND IS BADLY INJURED!
YOU'RE ....
JIAO DAN'S GRANDSON!?
GENERAL ....
GENERAL'S NOT HERE
TELL ME INSTEAD
GR.. NOP.. SAID TO ....
RUN AWAY...

HE SAID GENERAL, RUN AWAY QUICKLY
SOMEONE!
HAVE THE CAPTAINS ASSEMBLE IMMEDIATELY
WE'RE HAVING A MEETING INSIDE THE TENT!
SIR!

DO YOU BELIEVE HIM?
ADVISOR! WHAT ABOUT THE GENERAL
YES, I DO!!
THEN WE SHOULD DEFEND THIS CAMP AND WAIT FOR HIS RETURN
THAT CHILD
I WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM

I'M LEAVING THIS TO YOU
MMM...
DON'T WORRY, I HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THIS MATTER
IF MY LITTLE BROTHER WERE ALIVE... HE WOULD BE ABOUT THIS CHILD'S AGE
I'M LUO!
YA LUO OF HOUSE YANHAN!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
DO YOU UNDER-STAND
DON'T GIVE THIS TO ANYONE ELSE
I WANT YOU TO TAKE A HORSE AND GO TO THE MERCHANT CONVOY TO GIVE SOMETHING TO THE HEAD OF THE CONVOY
UNDER-STOOD!

IS NOT SOMEONE WHO IS EASILY KILLED
YOUR GENERAL...
AL-RIGHT
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO... TRUST THIS PERSON...

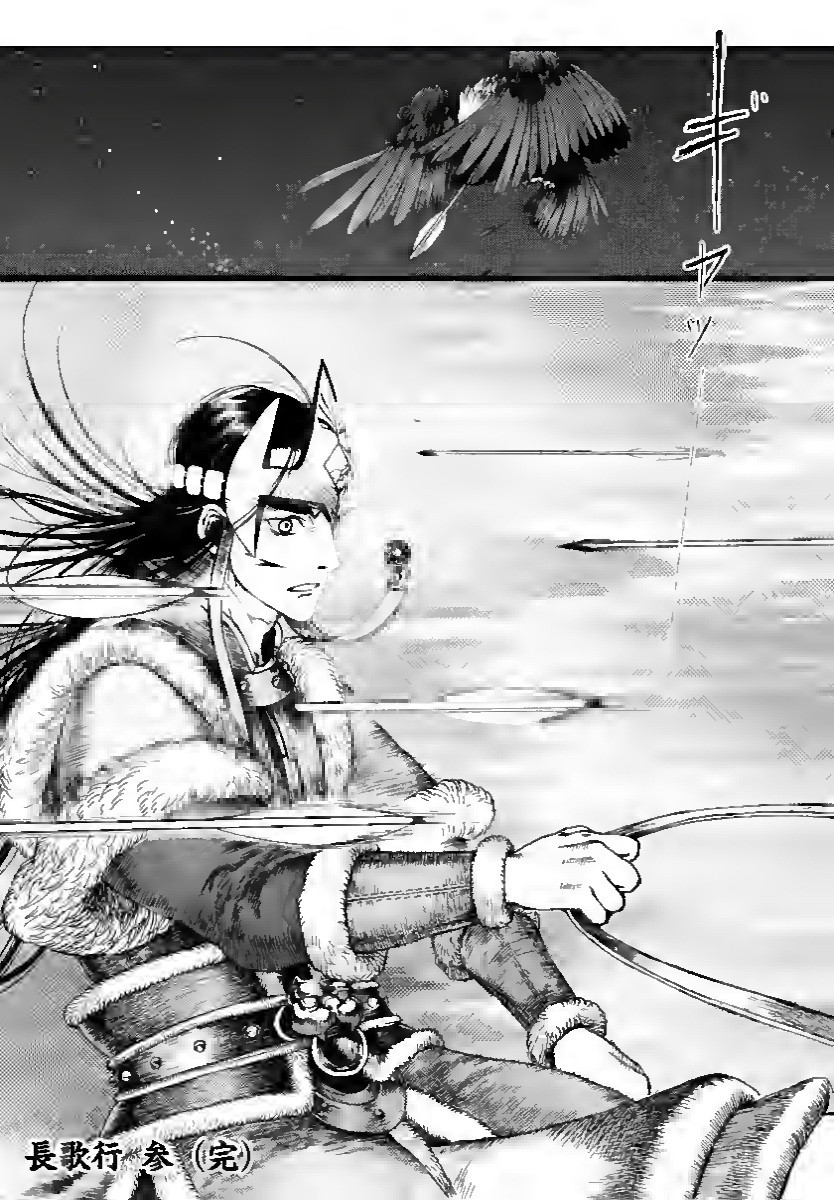
USUALLY YOU'RE MUCH FASTER GENERAL SUN BUT TODAY YOU'RE GOING SLOWLY
.....
IT'S TAKEN A WHOLE NIGHT FOR US TO COME HERE, SINCE OUR RENDEVUE
SHUT UP
WE'RE ALMOST THERE, ANYWAYS

THERE ARE NO LIGHTS...
DID THEY RUN AWAY ALREADY?
GENERAL, PLEASE GO AHEAD
HAH!

LET'S FOLLOW!
HAH!
バカバカ

SO NO ONE'S HERE
WAIT
THAT'S...

JIAO DAN!!!



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AIZEN HERE

AND THUS ENDS
VOLUME 3...

I DO NOT HAVE
THE RAWS FOR
VOLUME 4, NOR
HAS ANYONE RELEASED
A SCAN OF IT, SO FOR
NOW, THIS WILL BE IT
FOR CHOUKAKOU...

DO NOT LOSE HOPE
THOUGH, I HEAR
ANOTHER GROUP
HAS THE CHINESE
RAWS FOR THIS
AND MAY RELEASE
THEM!

cover design 森田彩美(POCKET)